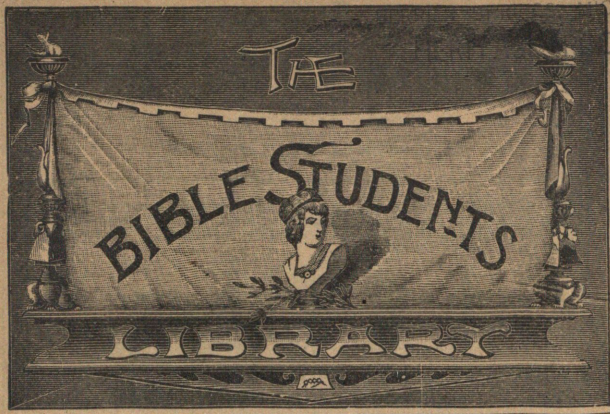


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PUBLISHED BY

Pacific Press Publishing Company.

12th & Castro Sts.,
OAKLAND, CAL.
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NEW YORK.
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Number 89. Oakland, Cal. January, 1892.

Entered at the Post Office in Oakland.

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A Foundation Stone of the Temporal Millennium.

WERE the doctrine of the spiritual millennium, or conversion of the world prior to the second coming of Christ, supported by God's word, we would gladly accept it, and labor for the happy consummation which those who advocate it predict. Did the history of the human race warrant us to expect the golden age, we would, in the absence of Bible testimony, regard the doctrine with favor. But the history of mankind does not warrant any such future, and the evidence of the word is positively against it. And, however much we might desire that reign of peace, surely it is not best to cling to error and delude ourselves with Utopian visions of the future, which will prove at the last but a mirage, while the perils of the last day find us unprepared. Better to face the facts, and prepare in God's strength to meet them. Error is always a source of weakness. One error, though harmless in itself, often becomes potent for evil by giving birth to others, or by hiding important and essential truths.

While the theory of the temporal millennium is based upon what seems to be plain and emphatic declarations of Holy Writ, it is, we believe, based upon a *misapplication* of those declarations. Its foundation stones are

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those promises and predictions respecting the earth; and it is assumed that these promises and predictions are fulfilled during the thousand years of Revelation 20. And while the foundation stones are perfect for what they were designed by the great Architect, they can never be used for the superstructure of the temporal millennium. They are of too heavy and substantial a material to be transported from that position in the history of the world where Infinite Wisdom has placed them.

It is upon a wrong application of these texts that, we apprehend, the temporal millennium theory is chiefly built. Starting out with the theory that the righteous receive their everlasting reward "beyond the bounds of time and space," and that the full blessedness of this reward is entered upon at the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the just, the only application which they can consistently make of the predictions of earth's glory is that they are to be fulfilled during the thousand years. This period of time is to be marked by great spiritual and temporal blessings. The earth is to be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;" "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb;" "they shall not hurt nor destroy;" the people "shall not build and another inhabit," etc., etc. There are many texts which refer to this happy condition of things. We believe in these precious promises most sincerely, but we earnestly contend that their application has reference not to the earth in its present condition, not to the gospel dispensation, not to the thousand years of Revelation 20, but to the earth renewed, and the eternal ages beyond.

Let us consider some of the declarations of the Bible concerning the earth. That it was created by God for mankind, that man was given dominion over it, that he lost that dominion and it passed into the hands of the usurper, Satan, will probably be denied by no devout Bible reader. This is evident from several considerations. It is expressly declared that man *was* given dominion; that he *is* sold under sin; that the purchased possession must be redeemed; that our Saviour came not only to save sinners, those who were lost, but "that which was lost." Hence Satan is called the "god" and "prince" of this world. He presented its dominion before the Son of Man as a temptation. But all this is to be changed. The Stronger than the strong man will come, bind the strong man, and spoil his house. That creation which was pronounced "good" by its Author, which has been marred and cursed by sin, will yet bloom in more than its Eden beauty.

The way in which this change is wrought is plainly set forth by the apostle Peter in the third chapter of his second epistle. He presents the earth in three phases: (1) "The world that then was," the antediluvian world, which, being overflowed with water, perished; (2) the present condition of the world, or "the heavens and the earth that are now," which are "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men;" and (3) the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," for which the people of God look according to his promise. See Isa. 65:17. Was the antediluvian world literal?—None will deny it. None but those who "willingly are ignorant" will deny the flood. Are

the heavens and earth that are now literal? Then the new heavens and earth are also literal. "The heavens and earth which are now" are the same as those which "perished" by the flood, differing only by the additional curse which came because of increased sin through the upheavals of that terrible event. The new heavens and earth are the same earth purified and renovated by the fires of the judgment, with the curse of sin removed. Purchased by the precious blood of Christ, it returns to its rightful Ruler, the Son of Man, the second Adam, its Creator and Redeemer. Where the curse has rested (and none will deny that the earth is that place), it will be said, "And there shall be no more curse." Rev. 22:3. The wicked also will receive their final punishment in the judgment fires which shall purify the earth. 2 Peter 3:9; 2:9; Mal. 4:1. Prov. 11:31 will be literally fulfilled, not in this life, but in that which is to come. The wicked will receive the execution of their sentence at the close of the thousand years, when they are raised from the dead. Revelation 20.

But where are the righteous during the millennium?—They are with Christ in heaven. At the second advent they are "caught up" "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), and taken by Him to those "many mansions" (John 14:1-3) which He has prepared for them. There they "reign with Christ a thousand years." During this period the earth, which was broken down and desolated by the presence of the Lord, lies forsaken and empty, reduced to a chaotic condition. At the end of this period, as above remarked, the fires of the last day will purify the earth, and destroy

the works of wickedness. And from its ashes will spring "new heavens and a new earth." The New Jerusalem, the capital city, will descend with that innumerable blood-washed throng to take possession of Eden restored. Earth's history does not end in the blackness of darkness. "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." Isa. 45:18. So the faithful are called to the inheritance of that kingdom prepared for them "*from the foundation of the world.*" Matt. 25:34. So "the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the *abundance of peace.*" Ps. 37:11. There will be no more sighing or sorrow, no more pain or woe, no more sad partings, no more death. "Jerusalem which is above," "the mother of us all," will be inhabited by her children; the everlasting Father, our adorable Redeemer, will dwell among them with His own glorious presence; the children, once captives of sin and Satan, are freed, and all at home. No longer will death claim them as his; the shout of the conqueror is theirs: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" No longer, in the "land of the enemy," will Israel hang their harps on the willows by the rivers of Babylon; but the "ransomed of the Lord," from every land and nation and age, "will return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Yes, God's purpose concerning the earth will be fulfilled—it will be inhabited by the faithful of all ages, whose blood has cried to God for justice to the oppressor,

and whose prayers are recorded in heaven. Long has the usurper ruled and blasted earth's fair domain; long has creation groaned and travailed under the curse; long has the agonizing cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" been forced from the lips of those who, laboring for sinners, have enriched the soil with their blood and watered it with their tears; long has the world been a vast charnel and lazar-house for the victims of sin; long have the careless, reckless, pleasure-seeking, world-loving mass of humanity passed heedlessly on over the graves of those who have gone before, recking not of the doom that awaits them; long have the faithful few lived and labored, prayed and preached, endured and died, for God and his truth; long—but not for aye! There succeeds to the long dark night of sin a brighter morn than earth has ever known—a morn whose ascending sun shall never know decline, whose day ends not with the night.

We firmly believe that the wrong conceptions held by the mass of Christians concerning the final home of the people of God, form the chief part of the foundation of the world's conversion theory. Had the church adhered to "the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers," which relates to the inheritance of the saints in light, and which is so plainly revealed in the word of God, the fascinating fable of the temporal millennium would not now be blinding so many of her children in regard to the coming day of God.