

NEW THINGS

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

Certainly Solomon was speaking only in a relative sense. Everything in the whole economy of nature has its revolutions. The Bible says, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22) The whole system of corruption and generation succeed each other, so that whatever has been shall be again. There is really physically absolutely nothing new under the sun in the course of terrestrial affairs. Only in this sense did Solomon mean that "there is no new thing under the sun". Outside this realm of things there are many new things. Even though there have been many new years, yet the one that we are soon to enter is as new as a new born babe. As we approach the beginning of a new year it is practical and profitable that we note the use of the word "new" as it appears in the Bible.

I. THE NEW COVENANT

While the Israelites were encamped around the foot of Mount Sinai, God gave them a wonderful law, of which Paul (1500 years later) described as the "first covenant". (Hebrews 8:7, 9:18-22) But leaving Sinai, we come 885 years later, which brings us to the days of Jeremiah. Here God said through Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I

took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, said the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:31-33) Hence sometime in the future the world was going to have something new, which would be called a "new covenant". Traveling 700 years forward we pass the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Then we read, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressors that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." (Hebrews 9:15) "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." (Hebrews 10:19-20) Hence we learn that "the new and living way" is the "new covenant" promised by the Lord through Jeremiah.

When we begin to study about the "new covenant", we find that it is full of "new things". It has a new hope, a new promise, a new law, a new sacrifice, a new priesthood, hence a new High Priest. Throughout the book of Hebrews we find the word "better" used often. In this epistle we find such expressions as, "a better hope" (Hebrews 7:19); "a better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6); "better promises" (Hebrews 8:6; "better sacrifices" (Hebrews 9:23); "a better country" (Hebrews 11:16;) and "a better

resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35)

This "new covenant" is new because it never becomes old, and it will never be superceded by another. After laying the foundation for this new covenant, Jesus gave Himself on the cross, gave His own blood to dedicate this new covenant-- this new and living way.

II. THE NEW BIRTH

When one accepts the gospel invitation he enters into the new covenant by a new birth. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) But Nicodemus could not understand this statement, so he asked Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4) No wonder Nicodemus could not understand it, for such had never been heard of before. In answer to the question of Nicodemus, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) In verse five He tells of what it consists --that is, "of water and of the Spirit." But how is man born "of water and of the Spirit?" In the expression "of water", surely Jesus meant water, or else "of the Spirit" does not mean Spirit. Baptism is the only thing to which it can refer, for it is the only religious act pertaining to salvation in which water is used. In the Christian system water is never used in any ordinance or ceremony except in the act of baptism. A common error is the idea that the birth of water refers to the natural birth and the birth of Spirit is the second or spiritual birth. This theory does violence

to the language of Jesus. He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he (the man already born physically) cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The natural birth is not the birth of water in John 3:5. Nicodemus had already been born of fleshly parents, and now Jesus tells him that he must be born again, not physically, but of water and of the Spirit, that is of both the water and of the Spirit. But what is the meaning "of the Spirit?" When one is born again and becomes a child of God it is according to the Spirit's instructions. Paul said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." (I Corinthians 12:13) That is, according to the teaching of the Spirit. One is baptized in water "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", and brought forth according to the teaching of the Spirit.

III. A NEW CREATURE

When one is born again he arises to walk in newness of life. Paul said, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) Such a person becomes a "new creature". Paul declares that, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27) He further says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Corinthians 5:17) Such a person has had a transformation of life. Paul said to the Ephesians, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And

be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24) Such a person becomes a new born babe in Christ. Peter said, "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (I Peter 2:2)

IV. A NEW NAME

Having come into this new covenant by a new birth, and thus having become a new creature, the new born babe receives a new name. One of our first pleasant duties as parents of a new born baby is to find a name for the child. God has a glorious name for His children to wear, and that name is "Christian". "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26) Peter said, "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." (I Peter 4:16 RV) This name "Christian" is not some human or denominational appellation signifying that those who wear it are sectarian in their doctrine and practice. It does not symbolize some ordinance or organization of the church, but it is an affirmation of those who wear this hly and divine name that they are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He whom they claim as their Saviour, their Redeemer, their Mediator, their Example, their Prophet, Priest and King.

V. A NEW FELLOWSHIP

While in the kingdom of darkness one's fellowship is with the king of that kingdom, and with all his subjects. But now his fellowship is different. John says "...and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

(I John 1:3) John continues to say to all Christians, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:7) Having been "delivered from the power of darkness" and having been "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son", Christians are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Ephesians 5:11) The Christian is to have no part with those of the world in their indulgence in sin and worldliness. Paul admonished Christians in these words, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2) It is, then, the business of every Christian to so live that his entire manner of life and influence will be a living rebuke to this sinful world.

VI. "NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH"

The apostle Peter said, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Peter 3:13) Peter declared that this is "according to his promise". Just when did the Lord promise us this "new heavens and a new earth"? Before Jesus went back to the Father in heaven, to the disciples he said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

We know that this earth can give us nothing that can give us perfect contentment. There is something about the soul that cannot be content with the things that are transient, material and perishable. There is an inward craving for something that this world cannot offer. Yet we mortals are continually placing our affection on things on the earth. While the Israelites were yet in the wilderness it was necessary for God to say to them, "For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you." (Deuteronomy 12:9) The Israelites were more interested in the present than the future. Hence God made it clear to them that the wilderness, of which they were then in, was not the land promised to them, but that before them lay the Promised Land, a land that flowed with milk and honey and all the abundant possessions which they were hoping to possess. Just what is the significance of this story for us? Paul said, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." (Hebrews 4:9) Thus Paul also said, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Hebrews 4:1) Hence we need to learn that this world of trouble, sorrow, temptation and sin is not our eternal dwelling place.

Concerning the eternal and blessed state of those who shall be redeemed in heaven, and also to show that the wicked shall not enter therein, John says, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27)

Is your name written there? All those who have passed through the new birth into the kingdom of God, into the new covenant, and have become new creatures in Christ, and enjoy the new fellowship in Christ, and wear worthily the new name, will be among that number.

If you are not among that number now, will you not obey the gospel of Christ that your name might be recorded in heaven? Then believe in the Lord with a trusting obedient heart, turn from sin and evil with your soul filled with godly sorrow and repentance, and upon a confession of the name of the Lord, be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Then you can claim the promise that the Lord will add you to His church, and if you will but live faithfully in His blessed service, you can then enjoy the eternal blessedness of a Christian's reward in glory.

Radio Sermon by Melvin J. Wise