

Liberation of the Creation: The Age to Come

By Robert Garrett

1. **MAIN TEXT: Romans 8:17-25** *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*
Vs.22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."
2. **Genesis 1:31** **"GOD SAW ALL THAT HE HAD MADE (the creation) AND IT WAS VERY GOOD."**
Because of sin, God subjected the creation to frustration, to the bondage of decay. But not permanently. God promised to liberate the creation when the sons of God would be revealed.
3. **SEQUENCE OF EVENTS : Rom.8:18-23**
 - 1st. **Redemption of Our Bodies** : verse 23: When Christ comes *for* His Church we will be *caught up to meet the Lord in the air*—1Thess 4:13-18. *We shall be like Him*—1Jn 3:2. *"He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"* —Phil 3:19-21.
 - 2nd. **The Sons of God Revealed** : verse 19 : When our Lord Jesus Christ comes in glory WITH His saints. (1Thess 3:13; Col 3:4; Jude 14; 2Thess 1:7-10; Rev 19:11-14).
 - 3rd. **Then the "CREATION ITSELF WILL BE LIBERATED** *from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."* (Rom 8:21).
4. **THE RESTORATION OF EVERYTHING** of Acts 3:19-21 is the **"renewal of all things"** promised by Jesus in Matt 19:28. It is the **liberation of the creation** of Romans 8:18-25
 - a) In Acts 3, Peter is speaking to Israel (vs 12). If ISRAEL will repent, then God will send the Christ! This particular promise never given to Gentiles, ONLY to Israel.
 - b) Christ **must remain** in heaven UNTIL the time of restoration (Acts 3:21). Therefore, the **"times of restoration,"** the **"liberation of the creation,"** the **"renewal of all things"** cannot take place until AFTER the second coming of Christ.
 - c) **What will be restored?**
Answer - The things prophesied by the holy prophets long ago in the Old Testament.(see page 2).
The Jews to whom Peter was speaking were familiar with the prophecies concerning the Restoration. They understood these prophecies literally (as did the Apostles) and expected the Messiah to bring it about. They also knew the prophecies about the suffering and rejection of the Messiah, but were unable to understand or reconcile them with the prophecies concerning the Restoration. Somehow dismissing them from their understanding and belief, they literally fulfilled them when they rejected and crucified Jesus. (See Luke 24:25-27).
5. **THERE IS AN "AGE TO COME"** after the present church age.
 - a) Jesus Himself told us that there is an **"age to come"**—Matt 12:32; Mark 10:30; Lk 18:29,30; Lk 20:34,35.
 - b) The Apostles also wrote of the **"age to come"**—Heb 6:5; Eph 1:21. This last reference tells us that Christ has been exalted, has been given all power and authority *"not only in the*

present age (the church age) *but also in the one to come.*” Therefore, Christ will not hand the kingdom over to the Father *at* His second coming, but will certainly rule *IN* the age to come. The theory, sincerely advocated by some, that Christ will turn the kingdom over to the Father at His second coming is based on a misunderstanding of 1Cor 15:24.

6. THE SEQUENCE OF THE RESURRECTION in 1Cor 15:20-28 :

The subject in this passage is the *resurrection*, NOT the end of the world. Paul is describing the order, or sequence of the resurrection. ALL will be raised — vs 22, but not all at the same time, *“But each in his own turn.”* —vs 23.

1st. **CHRIST, the firstfruits** (already raised almost 2000 years ago).

2nd. **THEN**—Greek, *epeita*, meaning *afterwards*—THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST will be raised *“when He comes.”*

3rd **"THEN"** Vs.24: (Greek, *eita*, does *not* mean "at that time" it means *next in turn*), = *"next in turn the END will come"*:

THEN = next in turn—*"The END will come."*—The end of what? The end of the resurrection of course!—He is giving us the sequence of the resurrection. Verse 23 says nothing about the resurrection of unbelievers because unbelievers are not included in the resurrection of the saints. The turn for the unbelievers to be raised will be at a later time, and their resurrection is the “end” of the resurrection.

WHEN WILL THE END OF THE RESURRECTION TAKE PLACE?

Verse 24 says that it will take place *“when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father.”*

When will that take place? It is *“after” He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.*”

How and when does He do that? *“For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” - verses 25,26.*

This putting of *“all His enemies under His feet”* **begins** at His second coming with the resurrection of the saints and **ends** with the Great White Throne Judgment and casting of death into the lake of fire. That is the scene of Rev. 19:11 to end of chapter 20.

Verse 23 agrees with Revelation 20:4-6. The Resurrection of those who belong to Christ must take place *before* the liberation of the creation of Romans 8:17-25, the restoration of all things prophesied by the holy prophets long ago. The rest of the dead will not be raised until the 1,000 years are finished. Thus, if the first “then” of 1Cor 15:23 has lasted almost 2000 years, there is no reason why the second “then” cannot also be a long period of time - and that is exactly what Revelation chapters 19 and 20 are telling us. Death is not destroyed until *after* the 1000 year reign, (Rev 20:14).

THEREFORE, the *“liberation of the creation,”* the *“times of restoration”* the *“renewal of all things,”* the *“age to come,”* begins with the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and lasts for 1000 years. It is only after these things have run their course that the rest of the dead are raised. It is only after having restored all things prophesied, having liberated the creation, having ruled the nations for 1000 years - **AFTER** He has done these things - **THEN** comes the **END** of the resurrection (Rev 20:11-15). The last enemy to be destroyed is death; and Christ now, having conquered all, turns the kingdom over to the Father.

7. **THE GLORIOUS REIGN OF MESSIAH** over the kingdoms of the world is described over and over again in the various books of the Bible long before we reach the book of Revelation. There are basically only two new things that Rev 20 tells us about the reign of Christ on earth after His second coming that we do not find elsewhere in the Bible. Those two things are:

1) The duration of the reign to be 1,000 years : and,

- 2) that Satan will be bound so that he might not deceive the **nations** during that time. (Satan is NOT bound during this Gospel age, because **now** "*the whole world is under the control of the evil one*" 1 John 5:19).

What are some of the prophecies of which Peter was speaking in Acts 3:21? And the things Paul had in mind in Romans 8:19-22 ? Their fulfillment would result in "*liberation of the creation,*" the "*times of restoration*" the "*renewal of all things,*" the "*age to come*" ?

- 1) **CHANGES IN NATURE** : Wild animals and snakes to become harmless and helpful. Many of these same prophecies also deal with the restoration of Israel and the reign of Christ in Jerusalem. - Isaiah 11: 1-12; Isaiah 65:25.
- 2) **DESERT SHALL BLOOM** : Land will bring forth plentiful crops—Isaiah 51:3; 35:1,2,6,7; Joel 2:19,22-24; 3:18; Amos 9:13-15; Micah 4:1-4.
- 3) **HEALTH AND LONG LIFE RESTORED TO MANKIND** : — **Isaiah 35:5,6; and Isaiah 65:17-25;**
 - a) **NO INFANT MORTALITY** - vs 20.
 - b) If a person dies at 100 years it is because he is a sinner rebelling against the rule of Christ (vs 20). Thus we see that sin and death are still present during that time for the people of the earth. (But not for we who have been glorified). The new heavens and new earth of Isaiah 65 is the millennial period of Rev 20:1-6, not the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21 & 22 where there is no more sin or death. The last enemy to be destroyed is death - 1Cor 15:26; Rev 20;14.
 - c) **LONG LIFE RESTORED**—"*as the years of a tree*" (verses 20,22). There are some living trees in America and other parts of the world that are more than 1000 years old.
Ezk 47:12:—leaves of that tree for healing.
- 4) **GLORY OF THE LORD IN JERUSALEM** - Isaiah 35:2, Isaiah 4:5,6; Isaiah 11:10; Ezk 43: "**THE LORD IS THERE.**"
- 5) **GOVERNMENT: IT WILL BE A TIME OF** -
 - a) **RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT** such as this world has never seen. Isaiah 11:1-5; Isaiah 9:6,7; Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4; Jer 23:5-8; Psalms 72:2,4,12-14; Psalms 2:6-9.
 - b) **APOSTLES RULING OVER ISRAEL** : Matt 19:28; Luke 22:29-30.
 - c) **CHURCH RULING WITH CHRIST** over the nations. 1Cor 6:2-3; 2Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26-29; Rev 3:21; Dan7:23; Luke 19:11-27.
- 6) **ONE LANGUAGE** : Zephaniah 3:9
- 7) **CONVERSION AND BLESSING OF THE NATIONS** : Zech 2:10-12; Jer 16:19-21 in context of verses 14,15; Micah 4:1-4; Zech 14:16.
Acts 15:14-18 tells us that God is now—in this present church age—calling people from the Gentiles for Himself. After this Christ will return (that is the second coming). Then He rebuilds the tabernacle of David. (The tabernacle of David is the royal house or dynasty of David.) Christ will then rule on David's throne. This will be the time of Restoration. During that time the remnant of the Gentiles will seek the Lord. This will be the result of the repentance of Israel as prophesied in Romans 11:11-27—note vs 11,12,15 "*life from the dead*" for the Gentiles.
- 8) **NO MORE WAR** : Isaiah 2:1-4.
- 9) **REGATHERING, REPENTANCE, RESTORATION OF ISRAEL; ISRAEL INDESTRUCTIBLE:**

Deuteronomy. 30:1-10; Jeremiah 30:1-22; Jeremiah 31:1-14, 23-28; Jer. 31:35-37; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Jer. 32:37-42; Ezekiel 11:16-20; Ezekiel 28:25,26; Ezekiel 36:24-28; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Ezekiel 39:25-29; Isaiah 60: 1-5,10-14.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.

"I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit.

"I will plant Israel in their own land, NEVER AGAIN TO BE UPROOTED FROM THE LAND I HAVE GIVEN THEM," says the LORD your God."

Amos 9:13-15.

Robert L. Garrett is Missionary to Zimbabwe, where his parents were also Missionaries. When not on the mission field, he resides in Louisville, KY.