

The Best is Yet to Come. No Twenty

My mother-in-law was a talented, hard working, farmer's wife, who raised a family, loved nature, taught Sunday school, played the piano, wrote some poetry and learned how to paint at a later age. In mid-life she was struck with multiple sclerosis, a disease which causes muscular weakness, tremors and failures of co-ordination. The last few years of her life were marked by a great deal of suffering. She became totally disabled. On occasion I mentioned to her that for Christians the best is yet to come. The best is the new heaven and earth where she will be able to walk again, write poetry, play her music and paint nature scenes. The end of our pilgrimage is the new earth. Some Christians see the new world as purely symbolic or far too other worldly. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the greatest theologian and philosopher of Roman Catholicism, believed that the saints in the new world will be in perpetual repose; both plants and animals will be superfluous on the earth, which will not be furnished with flora, fauna or even minerals, but there will be plenty of haloes for the saints. But Scripture plainly teaches that the promised new world is a real world, a new and happy homeland. Our Lord said, "I am making everything new!" (Rev.21: 5). Isaiah describes the new heaven and earth as the place where God's people won't toil in vain. There won't be any question of an infant living only for a few days, people will continue to live youthful lives, build houses, plant vines and enjoy their fruit (Isaiah 65:17-25). Unlike His original creation (Gen.1: 1), God will not create an entirely new world out of nothing. Out of the ashes of the old world a new world shall arise. The new earth will not be now in the sense as being brand new, that is, unused. It will be different in character. Different from what it once was. Relationships in the new world will be different than they are in the present earth. The life of God's people will be all together different and in that sense new. How gloriously different they will be we cannot even begin to imagine now. There is no proper earthly language to describe the unspeakable glory of our rich inheritance awaiting us. After Christ's return heaven and earth will be joined; they belong together. From Genesis on, God announced His intentions to restore the world and save a people for Himself. In this restored and purified world we will have glorified resurrection bodies. In the new world we will progress in knowledge, develop our talents, play our games and sing our songs. In the new earth there will be the absence of former things: no tears, no death, no sorrow or crying. And God will establish His righteous rule in the new earth. His kingdom will be a kingdom of perfect freedom and of infinite love; a world where Jesus Christ Himself "will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all"(1 Cor.15: 28). Indeed, for God's people the best is yet to come!