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“The days of our years are threescore years and ten ... for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90.10, KJV); “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more” (Psalm 103.15-16). We start this time with these two well-known Scriptures giving a simple message: life is passing, we are passing through, we are not here for very long.

By contrast, of course God Himself is not passing through! He alone is everlasting, permanent and unchanging (egs., Psalm 90.2 / Isaiah 40.28 / Jeremiah 10.10 / Romans 16.26 / I Timothy 1.17 / Hebrews 13.8). By God’s grace, as we bear these two truths in mind - our transience and God’s permanence – we are able to keep things in perspective in our daily lives.

For a start, we can be greatly comforted by the fact that all examples of human power, pride, success or rebellion against Almighty God are passing themselves. Scripturally we can think of Nebuchadnezzar gazing over his city, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”. His fall, foretold by “the most High” through Daniel twelve months earlier, quickly followed (Daniel 4.24-33). In this case “the most High” was merciful, once this arrogant king had learned his lesson, as Nebuchadnezzar then had the sense to recognise and proclaim (4.34-37).

On a smaller scale many of the kings and queens of Israel and Judah fell into this same trap of arrogance, assuming they could replace Almighty God on the throne with themselves, and forgetting as they did so that God is permanent and that they were not. In II Kings and II Chronicles we read of the succession of monarchs, a few of them largely good (such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehu and Hezekiah), and many of them largely or very bad (such as Jeroboam, Ahab, Athaliah and Manasseh). Each one came and went, leaving their mark for good or ill, until the long-forewarned judgements of God finally fell, first on Israel, and then on Judah.

We have seen the rise and fall of the four great empires so graphically foretold in Daniel Chapter 2, of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. We have seen the rise and passing of powerful leaders since Bible times, such as Charlemagne, William I, Saladin, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin; and in more recent times the passing of the British Empire, the demise of Mao-Tse Tung, Pol Pot, Saddam and Gadaffi, and the fall of the Soviet Union. Today we see the long-held global dominance of the United States being challenged, and the grand ambitions of the European Union under threat; (and what is more – perhaps of rather less importance - the once-mighty German football team is out of the World Cup!).

Truly, “ ... I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (Isaiah 12.11); and, “All flesh is grass ... The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (from Isaiah 40.6 & 8). And Jesus promises Himself, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24.35).

In I Corinthians 15 the Holy Spirit foretells through Paul of further great passings-away that are yet to come, through God's merciful providence in Christ.

All rule and authority and power, and all of Christ's enemies, will pass away, "put down" by Christ (vv 24b-25). Our mortal, corruptible bodies will pass away, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ... we shall be changed" (from v 52). Death itself is going to pass away – "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (v 26), and, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (vv 54b-55).

In Revelation 21.1 we read these Holy Spirit-inspired words through John, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea".

In other words, in God's good time, all that we see around us will simply pass away, but all the things of God Himself, including all those who believe and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, will remain, for eternity (eg., John 3.16 / 6.40 / Romans 10.9 / ...). Alleluia!

Next time God willing we can explore how the "passing-away-ness" of life benefits our daily Christian discipleship, but we close now with those familiar old words of Christ-dependent assurance: in Christ, and in Christ alone, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well". Alleluia once again!

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