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THE MORNING COMETH

“The watchman said, The morning cometh” (Isa. 21:12), and though, while making this answer, he forewarns us of night, he also assures us of the morning. There is a morning, says he, therefore do not give way to faintness of spirit; but there is a night between, therefore take warning, that you may not be surprised nor dismayed, as if the promise were broken, or some strange thing allowed to befall you.

There may be delay, he intimates, before the morning—a dark delay, for which we should be prepared. During this he calls for watchfulness, for the length of the night is hidden, the time of daybreak is uncertain. We must be on the outlook, with our eyes fixed on the eastern hills. We have nothing wherewith to measure the hours, save the sorrows of the church and the failing of hearts.

During this delay the watchman encourages us to “inquire,” to “return,” to “come.” He expects us to ask “how long,” and say “when will the night be done?” He takes for granted that such will be the proceeding of men who really long for the morning. To the hills of Seir they will again and again return, to learn of the watchman what is the promise of the day; for no familiarity with the night can ever reconcile them to darkness, or make morning less desirable and welcome.

It is right for us to desire the morning, to hope for it, to inquire as to the signs of it hour after hour. God has set this joy before us, and it were strange indeed if, when compassed about with so many sorrows, we should forget it, or be heedless as to its arrival; for the coming of the morning is the coming of him whom we long to see. It is the coming of him “who turneth the shadow of death into the morning” (Amos 5:8). It is the return of him whose absence has been night, and whose presence will be day. It is the return of him who is the resurrection and the life, and who brings resurrection with him; the return of him who is creation’s Lord, and who brings with him deliverance to creation; the return of him who is the Church’s Head, and who brings with him triumph and gladness to his Church.

All the joy, the calm, the revivifying

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freshness of the morning, are wrapt up in him. When he appears, day appears, life appears, fruitfulness appears. The curse departs. The “bondage of corruption” is no more. Clouds, storms,

troubles, sorrows vanish. The face of nature reassumes the smile of unfallen times. It is earth's festival, the world's jubilee. "The heavens rejoice, the earth is glad, the sea roars and the fullness thereof, the fields are joyful and all that is therein, the trees of the wood rejoice, the floods clap their hands, and the hills are joyful together before the Lord; for he has come, for he has come to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with his truth" (Psa. 96:11; 98:7).

This morning has been long anticipated. Age after age it has attracted the Church's eye, and fixed her hope. On the promise of it her faith has been resting, and towards the hastening of it her prayers have gone forth. Though afar off, it has been described, and rejoiced in as the sure consummation towards which all things are moving forward according to the Father's purpose. "There is a morning" has been the word of consolation brought home to the burdened heart of many a saint when ready to say, with David, "I am desolate!" or with Jeremiah, "He hath set me in dark places as they that be dead of old."

Let us dwell for a little time on some of these Old Testament allusions to the morning. Let us take first the Thirtieth Psalm.

David had been in sorrow, and in coming out of it he makes known to the saints his consolations: "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For there is but a moment in his anger; in his favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:4,5).

The earnest of that morning he hath tasted, but the morning itself he anticipates. Then joy has come. Then he can say, (verse 11) "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." But it is the voice of a greater than David that is heard in this Psalm. It is one of Christ's resurrection Psalms, the 18th and the 16th. He was "lifted up," so that his foes were not made to rejoice over him. He cried and was "healed." His "soul was brought up from the grave." There was anger against him "for a moment," when he bore the sinner's curse. But in Jehovah's favor there was "life." He had a night of weeping, a night of "strong crying and tears," when his soul was "sorrowful even unto death," and when beneath the waves of that sorrow he sunk, commending his spirit into the Father's hands. But it was a night no more. Morning came, and with morning, joy. Coming forth from the tomb, he left all his sorrow behind: his sackcloth was put off, and he arose "girded with gladness." He found morning and joy; and he is "the first fruits of them that slept." His rising was the rising of his saints.—There was a morning for him, therefore there shall be one for us,—a morning bright with resurrection glory.

Let us next take Psalm forty-ninth. These are Christ's words, as is proved from the quotation of

verse 4th in Matt. 13:35. He summons the whole world to listen. He “speaks of wisdom,” for he is Wisdom. He points to the vanity of riches, and their insufficiency to redeem a soul; and who knew so well as he what a ransom was needed? He sees men going on in their wickedness, self-confidence, and vain-glory. He contrasts the wicked and the righteous. “Over the wicked the righteous shall have dominion in the morning.” The morning then brings dominion to the righteous,—redemption from the power of the grave. In this Jesus rejoiced; in this let us rejoice. This joy of the morning was set before him; it is the same joy that is set before us. Dominion in the morning is that to which we look forward,—a share in the first resurrection, of which those who are partakers live and reign with Christ.

Look again at the forty-sixth Psalm. It is the utterance of the faith of Israel’s faithful ones, in the time of “Jacob’s trouble.” The earth is shaken (verse 2, compare with Haggai 2:6; and Heb. 12:26,27;) the sea and the waves roar (v. 3, compare with Luke 21:25;) but there is a river whose streams gladden them. God is in the midst of her. Nay, “God helps her when the morning appeareth, (verse 5, margin,) just as in the morning watch he looked out from the fiery cloud and troubled the Egyptians. Then the heathen are scattered at his voice,—he sweeps off every enemy, he makes wars to cease, and sits himself on high over the nations, as King of kings, “exalted in the earth.” From which we gather that the morning brings with it deliverance from danger,—victory over enemies, the renewal of the earth, peace to the nations, the establishment of Messiah’s glorious throne. What a morning of joy that must be, for the Church, for Israel, for the whole earth—resurrection for the church, restoration for Israel, restitution for the earth!

Look at the 110th Psalm. We see Jesus at Jehovah’s right hand, waiting till his enemies be made his footstool; and then he who said unto him “Sit,” shall say, “Arise.” (Psa. 82:8.) He is yet to have dominion on earth, and to sit upon the throne of his father David. Willingness, beauty, holiness, brightness, number; these shall mark his people in that morning of joy which his coming shall produce. “The dew,” says one, “is deposited in greatest plenty about the breaking of the dawn, and refresheth with its numerous drops the leaves and plants and blades of grass on which it resteth; so shall the saints of God, coming forth from their invisible abodes out of the womb of the morning, refresh the world with their benignant influence; and therefore are they likened to the dew, for all nature is so constituted of God as to bear witness of that day of regeneration which then shall dawn.”

Read also “the last words of David,” (2 Sam. 22:1-4,) in which, as in the 72d Psalm, “the prayers of David are ended,” or summed up. “There shall be a just one ruling in the fear of God; as the light of the morning shall he arise, the Sun of an unclouded morning, shining after a rain upon the tender grass of the earth.” Not till that Just One comes is that morning to dawn, for he is its light, and from his countenance is to break forth that light in which all earth is to rejoice. Then the

darkness of the long night shall disappear, and the tribulation tasted in the time of absence be forgotten in the abounding blessedness of his everlasting presence.

Let us hear how, in “the Song,” the bride refers to this same morning. She rejoices in the Bridegroom’s assured love, and her desires and longings are not questionings as to the relationship in which she stands to aim. This is with her a settled thing, for she has tasted that the Lord is gracious. “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” What directions do her longings take? Her “eyes are towards the hills,” over which she expects to behold him coming like a roe. Thus she pleads with him not to tarry: “Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or to a young hart on the mountain of spices” (8:14). Thus also she anticipates the morning of fuller joy, even while enjoying present fellowship: “He feedeth among the lilies until the day breaks and the shadows flee away” (2:16,17). And thus the Bridegroom himself, feeling, if one may so speak, the loneliness of the night, and that it is “not good to be alone,” longs, like herself, for the day, and resolves to climb the hills, where he may not only be regaled with freshest odors, but may catch the earliest gleams of dawn: “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense” (4:6). On that hill let us meet him in faith, and watch with him in hope, yet ever remembering that though his joy which faith gives here is unspeakably comforting, it is not the gladness of the marriage supper,—it is not the blessedness of the bridal day. For he himself, while telling his disciples, “Lo, I am with you always,” says also this, “I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the vine until the day that I shall drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matt. 26:29.)

Thus we see all kinds of joy brought within the circle of the morning. It is a morning of joy, because it is the morning introduced by him who said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11); by him “in whose presence there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore” (Psa. 16:11). But let us mark the different kinds of joy, and the different figures denoting it:

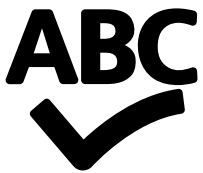
There is the joy of deliverance from overwhelming danger. This was the joy of the Jews when their adversary perished and Mordecai was exalted:—“The Jews had light, and gladness and joy, and honor, ... the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast, and a good day” (Esther 8:16). Such shall be the Church’s joy when her long captivity is done. “Then shall her mouth be filled with laughter, and her tongue with singing; having sowed in tears she reaps in joy.”—Psa. 66:2. There is the joy of harvest, Isa. 9:3; and such shall be the Church’s joy. There is the mother’s joy when her pangs are over, and the child is born into the world.—John 16:20. With such joy shall we rejoice, and our joy no man taketh from us. The joy in reserve for us is manifold and large; it will abide and satisfy; it is the joy of the morning;—a long, glad day before us; no evening with its lengthening shadows, no night with its chills and darkness.—“There shall be no night there, and they need no candle,

neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”—Rev. 22:5.

The prospect of this morning—this “morning of joy”—nerves and cheers us under all our tribulation. Were this morning an uncertainty, how dark would the night seem! how difficult for us to fight against faintness and despair! But the thought of morning invigorates and braces us. We can set our faces to the storm, for behind it lies the calm. We can bear the parting, for the meeting is not distant. We can afford to weep, for the tears shall soon be wiped away. We can watch the tedious sick bed, for soon “the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick.” We can look quietly into the grave of buried love and cherished hope, for resurrection shines behind it. Things may be against us here, but they are for us hereafter. The here is but an hour; the hereafter is a whole eternity.—*H. Bonar*.

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— *January, 1886* —



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