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IMMANUEL AND HIS DOMINION

—ISAIAH 9:1-7—DECEMBER 24—

Golden Text:—“Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”—Matt. 1:21

APPROPRIATELY the quarter’s lessons culminate in a prophetic picture of “Israel’s Hope,” and the “Desire of all Nations,” a picture of Messiah and his Millennial Kingdom. This lesson is especially appropriate also because of its date immediately preceding Christmas day, usually celebrated as the Memorial of Jesus’ birth. The story of Jesus’ birth and whole life and death, and resurrection even,

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would be of comparatively slight importance if disconnected from the prophecies of his glorious Kingdom power and reign, under which all the families of the earth shall be blessed. It was in view of this grand consummation to be accomplished by the Kingdom that the angels sang at our Lord’s birth of peace on earth and good will toward men, and proclaimed “good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people”—“in due time.”

We agree with Leeser’s translation that the first verse of the ninth chapter should properly be the last verse of chapter 8—that the second verse of our lesson begins a new topic: with it, therefore, we begin our present subject.

“THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS”

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” After the Hebrew idiom this statement pertaining to the future reads as though it related to something only in the past, just as in verse 6 we read, “Unto us a child is born,” whereas Jesus was not born at that time nor until several centuries later. The standpoint of the shining light is still future, the great light is not yet shining upon the people, they still dwell in the land of the shadow of death. The shadows of our demoralized, sinful, dying condition affect all of life’s interests for

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the world of mankind. As the Apostle explains subsequently, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, waiting.” (Rom. 8:22.) The world is still waiting for this great Light, which the Scriptures promise shall in due time shine forth, “The Sun of righteousness with healing in its beams.” (Mal. 4:2.) Our Lord refers to the same great event, still future, and assures us that when that Sun of righteousness shall shine forth it shall include not only himself but all of his faithful disciples, the ripened wheat of this Gospel age. He distinctly portrays this in the parable of the wheat and the tares, telling us that at the close of the age he would gather the wheat crop of this age into the garner—the heavenly state—and he adds, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear.”—Matt. 13:43.

We are still in the time when darkness covers the earth [civilized society] and gross darkness the people [the heathen]. True, there is a measure of light in the world: True, also, that light emanated from our dear Redeemer, his words and his works, and still shines forth from all those who are truly his and whose hearts are illuminated by his promises and his spirit. But this is not the light of the world scattering all of earth’s darkness and causing all to appreciate the glory of God. It is merely “the light that is *in you*,” in believers; it is a light of faith, a light of hope, a light of love ignited in the hearts of the little flock, who shine as lighted candles in the world. Our Lord’s light shone into a little corner of the world called Palestine, and from his lamp many followers have lighted their lamps. The Master’s instruction is, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven,” “Put not your light under a bushel but on a lampstand, that it may give light to all in the house.” But he adds, “The darkness hateth the light because its deeds are evil and are made manifest thereby,” “Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”—Matt. 5:15,16; John 3:20.

That the True Light is not now shining, that the Sun of righteousness has not yet arisen with healing in his beams, is fully evidenced by the gross darkness of heathendom and by the lesser darkness of Christendom. In proportion as the true followers of Jesus have kept their lamps trimmed and burning, in that proportion a measure of enlightenment has spread throughout the world. But all this is merely the shining of light in the midst of darkness, and a light at the present time and under present conditions is wholly inadequate to dispel the night and to bring in the glorious day for which the whole creation groans and still waits. That glorious day cannot come until the Lord shall first have found the members of his body who together with himself are to constitute the Sun of righteousness. Meantime, as the Apostle declares, the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, lest the glorious light of the goodness of God should shine into their hearts.—2 Cor. 4:4.

“A LANTERN TO MY FOOTSTEPS”

The prophet, speaking of the Church during this Gospel age appropriating the Word of God, the message of life eternal, the basis of our hopes and joys, declares, “Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, a lantern to my footsteps.” (Psa. 119:105.) The need of this lamp is most evident. Those who have it not stumble on in the darkness: we who have the light of the divine Word are not in darkness even as others—“Ye are all the children of the light and of the day.” (1 Thess. 5:5.) We belong to the new dispensation and our citizenship is in heaven. By faith we are dead to the world and live toward God, and are therefore counted as children of the light even in the present darkness; and the eyes of our understanding are enlightened by the hopes and gracious promises of the divine Word, while others rejecting this lamp are in corresponding darkness and ignorance.

The light, as the Apostle says, has shone into our hearts and that already through faith. If we look from the outward and natural standpoint of affairs, we would be as the remainder of the world. It is in proportion as we close our eyes to the things that are seen, and that we know by faith to be but temporary, and open the eyes of our understandings to the things unseen as yet and which are eternal, only in that proportion does the light by faith shine into our hearts. The glorious prospect is that soon the Church will be complete, soon the Sun of righteousness will shine and its rays will light to the uttermost parts of the earth, and that every child of Adam, sharer in his curse, shall ultimately be a sharer in Messiah’s great work of blessing by being brought under the influence of that great Light which shall constitute the Millennial age a day of blessing and of glory and of knowledge of the Lord. “This is the True Light which [ultimately]

lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”—John 1:9.

The prophecy of this verse goes beyond the living of that time and assures us that the light will shine to those who are in the shadow of death—in the deadly shade, properly a title of hades—those who are in hades, in darkness. Upon every member of our race the light must shine, because Christ hath redeemed us once for all. As all of Adam’s children were condemned before their birth, so all of them were redeemed, and the majority of them before their birth. They are as sure to get a blessing from Christ’s redemptive work as they surely did share in the curse that came upon Father Adam.—Rom. 5:12.

MULTIPLICATION BY RESURRECTION

“Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” This, the revised version rendering, is evidently the correct one. Leeser’s translation also agrees. The picture before us represents the world of mankind during the Millennial age, brought forth from the bondage of death, released from the Adamic curse, rejoicing as those who are dividing a spoil, sharing in something which is

not theirs, something which has fallen to them. It will be just so: the blessings of the Millennial age will be distributed as divine bounty, the curse will be rolled away, the Sun of righteousness will shine for all with healing in his beams, bringing restitution to all, and none will escape the blessings except they wilfully refuse them and do despite to God's favor. The same is true now to those who receive God's mercy. It is a gift; they can do nothing for it; they are merely assured that they are forgiven. The difference is that now a very few have the eye to see and the ear to hear and the heart to appreciate God's mercy as it

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is told to us in the good tidings which can be understood only by the hearing of faith. By and by, after the selection of the elect class, the Church, sight and knowledge will largely take the place of faith. The world, then realizing the grace of God in Christ Jesus, forgiving their sins and providing them with life eternal if they will accept it, will generally rejoice to divide the great spoil, the great gift of God.

Verse four delineates the cause for the rejoicing: it will be because the great oppressor, Satan, will no longer have control; his yoke of sin, pain, sorrow and death, his rod and staff of affliction and slavery, will be broken and that forever, as the Lord explains, "That old serpent the devil, Satan, shall be bound for a thousand years that he shall deceive the nations no more until the thousand years be finished." (Rev. 20:3.) The victory over the great Adversary is not to be a slow and gradual one, not to be by missions or any power of ours, but the Lord himself shall interpose his power.

"AS IN THE DAY OF MIDIAN"

The day of Midian was the day of Gideon and his little band, when suddenly at the breaking of the pitchers and the blowing of the rams' horns the Lord overwhelmed the powerful hosts of the enemies of his people and granted them a great and miraculous deliverance. Gideon evidently prefigured our Lord Jesus, as Gideon's little band prefigured the little flock of Christ, the saints, the very elect. It was after the testing, the sifting, of this little company that the Lord granted the great deliverance. And thus it will be in the end of this age: as soon as the Gideon band, the Royal Priesthood under the captaincy of the glorified Christ, shall have given their message and let their feeble lights shine out, that the Lord will grant the great victory for truth and righteousness through a time of trouble which shall come upon the world but which will eventuate in a great blessing upon all people, the binding of Satan and the release of all the oppressed. We read of the grand consummation of the matter, the end of

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sin and trouble, in the figure of the fifth verse, which in the Leeser translation reads, “For all the weapons of the fighters in the battle’s tumult and the garments rolled in blood shall be burned, become fuel for the fire.” The interpretation of this is that all the weapons of Satan, all the accessories of sin and death, everything that pertained to this great conflict which for centuries has prevailed in the world between righteousness on the one hand and sin on the other, all these shall be utterly destroyed. The picture shows us the world cleansed of every evidence of opposition to the divine government and law of righteousness, and accords well with the statement, “All voices in heaven and earth and under the earth and in the sea heard I saying, Blessing and glory and honor and dominion and right and power unto him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb.”—Rev. 5:13.

HOW IT WILL BE BROUGHT ABOUT

The word “for” with which the sixth verse opens signifies because: hence we read, “Because unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.” The because is an explanation of the process by which the foregoing gracious prophecy of blessing and release from the oppressor shall be accomplished. The Lord would draw the attention of all who had the hearing ear of faith to the fact that no such Kingdom of righteousness, no such enlightenment and blessing of the world could be possible until first Messiah should come. He would show also that Messiah would be born after the manner of mankind, and would nevertheless be the Son of the Living God. How beautiful, how simple is the entire statement from the standpoint of faith, yet how possible it is for the wisdom of this world to stumble over even such simple statements as these and to claim, as higher critics do, that this prophecy was wholly to the Jews of Isaiah’s day and that the one of promise was King Hezekiah. Blessed are our eyes if they see and our ears if they hear the true meaning of this prophecy, and thus permit us to recognize in it the Messiah, the Sent of God, Immanuel, God with us, to be the great deliverer and to accomplish for us all the wonderful things which God has spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, confirming his promise made to Abraham, “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Continuing, the prophecy pictures the child grown to manhood and the government placed upon his shoulders—the responsibility falling upon him as a royal mantle from the heavenly Emperor, Jehovah. The prophecy steps over the earthly trials and sufferings of our Redeemer, the Head, and of the Church, his body, throughout this Gospel age; it ignores the names Beelzebub, prince of devils, man of sorrows, etc., and points us to the complete and glorified Messiah at his second advent, as viewed from the standpoint of Jehovah and from the standpoint from which ultimately the whole world shall recognize him, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to him to the glory of the Father. “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God [or mighty Lord], Everlasting Father [or giver of everlasting life], the Prince of Peace.”

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

A name stands for or represents the character, disposition, or qualities or powers of an individual. Thus all these names, these titles given to our Lord, represent his majesty, dignity, power and glory of his work. Our Lord is already recognized by his true followers, who know him as the most wonderful Counsellor: no other counsel, no other teaching, is like his. The world in general has yet to learn this respecting him, but it will be generally known before the close of the Millennial age, for unto him every knee must bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:10.) If after they have confessed him the wonderful, wise Counsellor, Teacher, Guide, they then shall wilfully and deliberately ignore and reject his teaching and assistance and sin wilfully and intentionally, they must die the second death, “Be utterly destroyed from amongst the people. (Acts 3:23.) He is recognized now by his true followers as the Mighty Lord, the Mighty God—not as the Father but as the Father’s representative, voice, mouthpiece, the well-beloved Son whom he has clothed with glory, honor and immortality, and given all power in heaven and in earth necessary to the accomplishment of the great work entrusted to him, the fitness for which he demonstrated by his love and loyalty even unto death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus will be the Everlasting Father of the human race in the sense that Adam, their father, failed to give them life, and that our Lord Jesus redeemed Adam and

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all his possessions, and thus became the author of everlasting life to all who would obey him. This will include all of the human family, who will attain to everlasting life, except the Church class of this Gospel age, who are reckoned as specially adopted out of the world and begotten of the heavenly Father, as we read, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us.” (1 Pet. 1:3.) These Spirit-begotten ones are separate and distinct, and are scripturally designated the New Creation, and are spoken of not as children of Christ but as brethren, in one figure, and as his Bride and joint-heirs in another. But to the world, Christ, the Head, and the Church, his body, will be the everlasting Father, the Father or Life-giver, through whom all who will may have everlasting life—life to all eternity by Jehovah’s arrangement.

Another of his titles shall be the Prince of Peace. While his Kingdom will be introduced by the great time of trouble such as never was before, the trouble will not be of his producing. It will be the legitimate result of the wrong course of sin and selfishness fostered by the great oppressor, Satan. The Prince of Peace will put down, subdue, all enemies, all sin, all unrighteousness, all insubordination to the divine will. He will not fail nor be discouraged. Nothing shall hinder the accomplishment of this great mission entrusted to him by the Father. His love of peace shall not hinder him from dashing the nations to pieces as a potter’s vessel, that righteousness may be

established upon a firm and sure foundation.

“UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID”

The word David signifies beloved, and the kingdom entrusted to king David was God’s Kingdom in a typical form, which was promised never to pass away. It was maintained by the Lord down to the time of Zedekiah, when we are told the crown and diadem of authority and power were removed to be overturned, overturned until he should come whose right it is. (Ezek. 21:27.) Our Lord in the flesh, as a descendant of David, was the legitimate heir to that crown of authority and dominion, that Kingdom of David which should have no end; but instead of establishing his Kingdom then, he declared, “My Kingdom is not of this world,” not of this age, not of this present dispensation, and began the selection of the little flock who in the world to come or age to come will be his joint-heirs and associates in the Millennial Kingdom. This work of selecting the Church, the kings, rulers, princes, has since been in progress, and we have the assurance of the Lord’s Word and character that it will reach a final and glorious consummation worthy of our God.

When Christ and the Church in glory shall reign over the earth, it will thus be the continuation or exaltation of the Kingdom of God which was begun in David and natural Israel. This greater David, this greater beloved one of the Father, full of grace and truth, will establish righteousness in the earth with judgment—with punishments for wrong-doing and rewards for right-doing. “The zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall perform this.” Although the Millennial Kingdom will be under the direct supervision of our glorious Lord and his associated Church, yet behind will be the Father’s power, communicated, delegated, granted. As the Apostle assures us, when it is said that all things will be put under subjection to Christ, it is manifest that Jehovah is excepted, for he it is that puts all things under him. Then shall the Son also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God [the Father] may be all in all.—1 Cor. 15:27,28.

Immanuel’s government, from the time of its beginning to the time it will be transferred to the Father, will be one continuous success; there will be no breaks or vicissitudes. “Of the increase of his government there will be no end.” The discipline and order which he will establish will be on such a firm basis that day by day will see it more secure, until finally the consummation having been reached, the testings all being complete, the wilfully incorrigible having been destroyed, the dominion without ending will be passed to the Father. It was the Father’s Kingdom from the time of David; it will be the Father’s Kingdom under the control of Messiah during the period of subjugation and restitution, the Millennial age; and it will be the Father’s Kingdom without end after it shall have been “delivered up to God, even the Father,” and the assurance given is that the work of reconstruction will be so thoroughly carried out that never again will sin bring a curse upon the earth.

CALL HIS NAME JESUS

Our Golden Text sums up the entire work of our Lord Jesus and indicates that it is all implied in the meaning of the name Jesus, Savior. We sometimes refer to our Lord as the Savior of sinners, and properly so, because we are all sinners through our share in the Adamic fall. We sometimes speak of him as the Savior of the world, and properly so, because the whole world was lost through Adam's disobedience, and the whole world was redeemed and is to have the glorious opportunity of reconciliation to the Father through their Redeemer. But it is also appropriate that we note the statement of this text, "He shall save his people from their sins." This statement, that only the Lord's people are to be saved from their sins, is in full agreement with the other statements that he is the Savior of sinners and the Savior of the world, because although his salvation must extend to and embrace every member of Adam's race, yet only those who when they know of the great salvation and of the opportunities accorded them accept the same and become his people—only they shall get the full salvation and be delivered completely from death, and attain to the life everlasting, which is the gift of God to all those who obey him, and to no others.

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Let us each, while rejoicing in the glorious prospects of the world in the Millennial Kingdom time, and while hoping for a share in the Kingdom itself as our Master's joint-heirs, remember that we are still in the flesh and must still fight a good fight, war a good warfare against sin in its every form and particularly against its reign in our own flesh. We will never conquer completely every weakness and every imperfection of the flesh, and hence our hope for which we wait is our change to the new bodies which shall be ours as inheritors of the Lord's resurrection blessing. But meantime, in order to be accepted of the Father, in order to be acceptable with our Master and Lord and Redeemer, our hearts at least must show full loyalty to the principles of his righteousness and corresponding opposition to sin in its every form.

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— December 15, 1905 —



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