

ZION HEARD AND WAS GLAD.

"Zion heard and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord." – Psa. 97:1-8.

So says the Psalmist speaking prophetically. Taking a standpoint future, and looking back, he tells how Zion and Judah were made to rejoice by some special tidings of great joy. Was it the tidings of a long promised Messiah for whom the world had been looking for four thousand years, now found in Bethlehem? This was good news, but not the tidings referred to. Was it the message that the sacrifice is accomplished which has procured man's redemption? That is the foundation of all their hope, but that is not the special cause of rejoicing mentioned here. Was it that the crucified one has been raised from death by the power of the Father? That was glorious news; for in that God hath raised him from the dead, he hath given assurance unto all men of the acceptance of his sacrifice as a satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and therein, all who believe, may read their title clear to everlasting life.

But there is still another cause of rejoicing mentioned by the Prophet, and it is the greatest cause of rejoicing we have ever yet had. It was blessed to know that the plan of God had so far progressed as to secure the birth, death, and resurrection of the promised deliverer; but it would be still more blessed to know that the plan has so nearly reached its glorious consummation as to show that the time is fulfilled for the actual establishment of his kingdom and the commencement of his reign which is to bring mankind into the actual possession of the life and blessings secured by the ransom, and this is just the message that now comes to us; and those who believing, realize it, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: "The Lord reigneth! and the fulfillment of every foretold sign of his presence bears witness to the fact.

But where is the Zion that rejoices? We see that it is not all who claim to be of Zion; it is not the great nominal church for they turn away from the message, and say, Where is the promise of his presence? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning. They have forgotten the foretold sign of his presence, and the object of his coming, and [R815 : page 7] do not desire his appearing. But the true Zion are now made manifest. They hear of his presence, remember the foretold signs and realize their fulfillment; they mark the accumulated testimony of all the prophets, and they have learned from the Scriptures that the object of that reign is the restoring and blessing of all the families of the earth, which he purchased from the dominion of death nearly nineteen centuries ago.

In view of this good news the Prophet not only foretells Zion's rejoicing, but he calls upon the earth to rejoice with her – "The Lord reigneth! let the earth rejoice." (ver. 1.) But the earth is not yet prepared to rejoice; for "Clouds and darkness are round about him," (ver. 2.), and they cannot see the blessings beyond because they walk only by sight, and not by faith. They do not know the Lord and have neither faith nor interest in his coming. They will only come to realize his presence in the exhibition of his power, under which they will first suffer before they can be blessed; for the powers of this world must either melt or be overthrown in the great time of trouble which accompanies the setting up of the kingdom of God.

Notwithstanding the fact that mankind has been oppressed, and trodden under foot, and kept in ignorance, poverty and distress, by the powers of this world; notwithstanding the fact that by injustice, and war, and blood-shed, and tumult, and strife, the powers that be have gained and retained their mighty influence, men fear their overthrow lest the greater evils of anarchy and confusion prevail. They have come to regard those systems of oppression with a measure of pride, and have partaken of and manifested their spirit, and millions of men have given their lives for their defense. But the children of God regard them in a very different light.

The different estimates of the kingdoms of this age by the world and by the saints is strikingly illustrated by the two visions of them to Nebuchadnezzar and to Daniel. To Nebuchadnezzar they appeared as a great image of glory and power, the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs and feet of iron, the feet being partly of iron and partly of clay. These four divisions represented respectively the universal dominions of Babylon, Medo Persia, Grecia and Rome. These have succeeded each other and held the dominion of the earth since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and we are now living under the decaying power of the Roman dominion as illustrated in the mixture of iron and clay which formed the feet of the image. The stone which is to fill the whole earth is about to smite the image and utterly destroy it. (Dan. 2:34-45.) The kingdoms now in existence, represented in the feet of the image, received their power and authority originally from the Papacy, or some of her protesting daughters and imitators, who crowned them or their ancestors, and still they claim, according to their word, that they reign "by the grace of God." Men dread the destruction of this great image of human power which has overawed, overpowered and deceived them for so many centuries, and would avert its destruction if they could.

But to the children of God, as to the prophet Daniel, these same four universal powers appear as four dreadful, ferocious wild beasts – a lion, a bear, a leopard, and another beast so great and terrible as to almost baffle description. These represented respectively the same governmental powers as those illustrated in Nebuchadnezzar's vision. The last and most terrible beast was Rome, and how terrible has been its history of crime and oppression and wickedness! The days of its triumphal march were filled with the groans of martyred saints, with the wails of the widowed and orphaned, with the boast of malice and licensed crime and oppression, with high-handed tyranny, and with a brazen-faced impudence which flung defiance in the face of the Almighty. Well may we rejoice that our day witnesses its waning power.

Although as its power has waned, we have seen that greater liberty and happiness has been enjoyed by mankind, yet we see that full liberty and perfect happiness cannot be enjoyed until the last vestige of its oppressive power is destroyed, until it is hunted out in every hiding place where it secretly lurks, until its pernicious doctrine of the divine right of kings to oppress and impoverish the people is fully eradicated, until its blasphemous utterances against the God of heaven are made fully manifest, though hiding even under the name of Protestantism, until its great power is utterly destroyed, and its very memory has become a hissing and a by-word.

Is it any wonder that Zion rejoices as she realizes the presence of him who has been consuming this power with the spirit of his mouth (by the manifestation of his truth), and who is to completely destroy it with the brightness of his presence (Gr., *parousia*)? 2 Thes. 2:8.

Notice the indications of his presence mentioned by the Psalmist, and now coming to pass: "Clouds and darkness are round about him." The storm clouds that are now gathering are visible to all the world, and darkness – ignorance of God's ways – everywhere prevails. The Church nominal, as well as the world, is in total ignorance of what the outcome shall be.

"His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw and trembled." In the midst of the dark forebodings of the gathering storm come the lightning flashes of truth, due in this time of his presence, and because of his presence. Truth on various subjects is thus being revealed. Men are getting ideas which they never dreamed of before. The spirit of inquiry is abroad. Men are beginning to inquire, What are our natural rights? How did kings and emperors get the right, if right it is, to rule over their fellow-men and to oppress them for their own advantage? By what fair (?) means do some men, with little or no labor, acquire millions of money, while others, by severest toil, can scarcely gain life's necessities? By what means do the comparatively few gain

and retain a monopoly of the blessings of life, while the great mass of mankind live in poverty and discomfort?

Gradually, but rapidly, the masses are coming to see that the overplus of power is in their grasp, that their overwhelming numbers and force only want systematizing and organization, and to this work great efforts are now being directed, and beneath the tread of the mustering hosts and their accumulating power, thrones tremble. The lightning flashes of truth are bringing about these changes. The increase of knowledge, the general diffusion of education, the multiplying of inventions, the general interchange of thought, the wider range of commercial interests, the rapid modes and cheap rates of travel and the advantage that is taken of it, the multiplicity of books and periodicals, and the wonderful power of the daily press – all these influences have been waking men up to an appreciation of their manhood, and they will not long permit it to be ignored and trampled in the dust for the selfish aggrandizement of the few. Gross ignorance and superstition are rapidly becoming things of the past.

But it is not to be presumed that these efforts of the masses will proceed on the golden mean of propriety. No; like a pendulum, they will swing to the very opposite extreme of impropriety; and hence the great trouble, the anarchy and confusion which will result. This destructive trouble is represented by fire – "A fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies round about." It will destroy the enemies of God and men, the oppressive organizations of both church and state, and thereby liberate the people.

But it will soon be discovered that the liberty gained is even worse than the oppression from which they have escaped. The unrestrained liberty of all men in their present fallen condition, would be the worst evil that could befall the world. And such anarchy will be the result of their efforts. This is all they will be able to accomplish, and in so doing they will exhaust their power. None will be able to assume the control, and direct affairs to a satisfactory settlement. Thus men will become

convinced of their own utter inability to rightly adjust the tangled problem. This is just where God wants to bring them that they may hear him say, "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth." (Psa. 46:10.) He will say it not by voice, but by the manifestation of his power, and then men will be prepared to realize that "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." The new heavens (the new kingdom) will declare his righteousness, and *all* the people shall see his glory. Those who have worshiped those false systems of church and state as idols, will be confounded when thus they witness their complete destruction. (verses 6,7.)

Again says the Psalmist prophetically, "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." (verse 5.) Mountains and hills are symbols of governments. Some will melt under the fervent heat, while others will be carried forcibly into the midst of the sea. (Psa. 46:2.) We have today in Great Britain an illustration of a mountain melting. It has enough political wisdom to see the rights, and to concede some of the demands of the people. It is melting and flowing down to some extent to the level of the people's interests. If all the governments would do this, if they would all melt down and fully concede to the people their rights, then much of the great calamity of revolution would be averted; but this, all will not do. The **[R816 : page 7]** policy of Russia, for instance, is to concede nothing to the people, but to retain all its oppressive power intact. It will not melt; therefore it shall be forcibly carried in the tumult of revolution "into the midst of the sea." The sea in symbolic language represents the masses of the people unrestrained by law and order; hence the carrying of a mountain into the midst of the sea, would signify the overwhelming of a government in a revolutionary uprising of the masses. (Psa. 4:2.)

As Zion sees all these things coming to pass, she recognizes in them the evidences of her Lord's presence and the preparation for the kingdom of heaven, and knowing what the glorious outcome will be,

and that shortly, she rejoices notwithstanding that clouds and darkness are round about him for a time. She knows that

"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice" also; for it is great cause for rejoicing if they could only have faith to realize it. But we rejoice further to know that though their eyes are now so blinded by prejudice and false doctrine that they cannot see the evidence on which to rest faith, by and by their blindness shall be removed and they shall have the evidence in demonstration.

The first to realize it after Zion, will be the daughters of Judah, fleshly Israel, whose blindness shall be taken away. Already we learn that the blindness is beginning to be turned away. Soon all the daughters of Judah will see and rejoice together because of the Lord's judgments against oppression and tyranny, and because of the returning favor of his "Covenant people." Soon the glory of the Lord will be revealed to all; the **[R816 : page 8]** clouds being rolled away the Sun of righteousness shall shine forth with healing [restitution] in his beams and all flesh shall recognize it together.

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