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## "WHO HATH HEARD SUCH A THING?"

"Before she travailed she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children." – Isa. 66:7,8.

THE name "Zion" was anciently applied to a prominent hill of Jerusalem, generally regarded as the south-western and highest of those on which the city was built. It included the most ancient part of the city with the citadel; and, being first occupied for a palace, [R1648 : page 135] it was called "the city of David." (2 Chron. 5:2.) It was also called the "holy hill," or "hill of the sanctuary." (Psa. 2:6), being the original site of the tabernacle, pitched by David for the reception of the ark.

By the prophets the name was often put for Jerusalem itself, and also for its inhabitants, sometimes called sons or daughters of Zion. It was also used in a wider sense, as was Jerusalem also, to signify the entire nation of Israel. And since fleshly Israel was typical of spiritual Israel, the Gospel Church, the symbolism applies with still deeper significance to the Gospel Church, which term, throughout the Gospel age, included the entire body of professed Christians, all of whom are on probation for full membership in the Church triumphant – the true Church, the Zion of the future, and the true Zion of the present age, the elect "little flock" to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom. In the symbolic application of the term we must therefore judge from the character of the prophecy whether the reference is to the fleshly or to the spiritual house of Israel, or to both; or, if to the latter, whether it applies in its broadest sense to the nominal gospel church, or to the elect little flock, the only true Church in God's estimation.

The symbolic travail, in the above prophecy, is a reference to the great time of trouble – the travail that is to come upon the nominal gospel church, great "Babylon," from which some are to be counted worthy to escape. (Luke 21:36.) This is indicated by the preceding verse which locates the time of this prophecy as synchronous with that wherein is heard "a voice of noise [confusion] from the city" (Babylon), and "a voice [of truth and warning] from the temple" (the elect little flock of consecrated and faithful ones), and "a [R1649 : page 135] voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies" – in the great time of trouble.

The travail that is coming is to be upon nominal Zion – "Christendom," "Babylon;" and it will be a great and sore affliction – "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." But the marvelous thing the Prophet here has to record is that a man-child is to be born out of Zion before this travail comes. This is a striking reference to the fact, elsewhere clearly taught, that the ripe wheat of the Gospel Church is to be separated from the tares, that they are to be exalted and glorified before the burning, the consuming trouble, shall come upon the latter. This man-child is, therefore, the little flock – the true Zion in God's estimation, the body of Christ; as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion [the nominal gospel church] the deliverer [the Christ, Head and body], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [the fleshly Israel or Zion]." – Rom. 11:26.

This is the man-child that is to bless all the families of the earth. (Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:16,29.) The birth of the man-child is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are all they that have part in the first resurrection. Such are now begotten of God by the Word of truth, and quickened by the holy spirit (Jas. 1:18; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 8:11), and in due time – before the travail – they will be born in the glorious likeness of Christ. The birth of this man-child began over eighteen hundred years ago with the resurrection of Christ Jesus. There the head of this body of Christ came forth; and as surely as the head has been born, so surely, shall the body come forth. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to

bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth and shut the womb? saith thy God." (Isa. 66:9.) Ah, no: "the man-child," the Christ complete, the Great Deliverer, shall come forth.

Yet "who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?" for not only shall the body of Christ, the true overcoming Zion, the "holy nation, the peculiar people," be delivered out of nominal Zion, before the travail; but when she travails a great company of other children will be born. This is the great company described in the Apocalypse as coming up out of the great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14.) The body of Christ, the man-child, born before the travail, will be composed of those who heard and obeyed the call, "Come out of her, my people," etc. **[R1649 : page 136]** (Rev. 18:4), and who were counted worthy to have part in the first resurrection; while the many children born through the great tribulation will be those believers in nominal Zion, Babylon, who have allowed themselves to become measurably intoxicated by the spirit of Babylon, the spirit of the world, and who, therefore, are not quick to discern and prompt to obey the voice of the Lord in this harvest time. They fail to see that it is harvest time, and consequently fail to understand the separating work which the sickle of present truth is accomplishing, regarding those servants of God who wield it as enemies, and hence as opposing them and the Lord whom they serve.

The great tribulation or travail that is coming upon nominal Zion is the only thing that can convince such as these – and they include a large number of believing children of God, whose manner of life is righteous and generally circumspect, but who are nevertheless worldly-minded, and who are not rendering themselves a living sacrifice to God, following him through evil and through good report, and meekly bearing the reproach of Christ. They have respect to men's opinions, traditions and plans, and fail to fully submit themselves to the will and plan of the Lord. And only when they behold the wreck of nominal Zion – Christendom, Babylon – will they realize its gross errors and be delivered from them and it.

"Behold," says the Prophet, "I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and Rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Rom. 9:33; Isa. 8:14,15; 28:16.) That stumbling-stone is the doctrine of redemption through the precious blood of Christ. At that stone the fleshly Zion stumbled, and so now the nominal spiritual Zion is stumbling at the same stone; for it was to be "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to *both* the houses of Israel" – the fleshly and the spiritual. The elect little flock of overcomers do not so stumble, but recognize this as the chief corner-stone of the true Zion, remembering the words of the Prophet, "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which believe [in Christ as your Redeemer, who bought you with his precious blood] he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient,...the same is made ...a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Pet. 2:6-8); for God does not propose to deliver his Kingdom unto any of the disobedient. They need the fiery trial of the coming tribulation to bring them into a proper attitude before God; and hence must come up through the great tribulation.

While those who are truly begotten of God and who have been quickened by his spirit to the new spiritual life, and who are faithful in fulfilling their covenant of entire consecration as living sacrifices unto God, may well rejoice in hope of the first resurrection, and of being born before the travail upon nominal Zion, it is also a cause for rejoicing that many of the weaker children of God, now stumbling with nominal Zion, will, nevertheless, by and by be recovered and saved so as by fire (born) through the great tribulation (travail), in which nominal Zion shall expire, but from which they shall come forth.

### **REJOICE YE WITH JERUSALEM.**

"Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that mourn for her." "Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.

And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." – Isa. 66:10; 65:18,19.

This call to rejoice with Jerusalem immediately follows the prophetic announcement of the birth of Zion, the terms Zion and Jerusalem being used here interchangeably. The birth of Zion, the exaltation of the body of Christ to kingdom power and glory, will indeed be cause for rejoicing on the part of all people; for it is for this exaltation and manifestation of the sons of God that the whole creation waits, groaning and travailing together in pain until now. – Rom. 8:22,23.

When the true Zion is thus exalted, then will follow the great work of the Kingdom. The travail upon nominal Zion immediately succeeding [**R1649 : page 137**] will quickly liberate the true children of God still in her, and they shall come forth to larger views and higher principles, and to develop rapidly into nobler characters. The rule of the iron rod will quickly subdue all things, completely breaking up the whole present social fabric and accomplishing the leveling process which will make ready for the peaceful reign of righteousness.

Then the great Millennial reign of righteousness will begin, when every man will have a full, fair opportunity to win eternal life by faith and obedience. And no man's opportunity will be less than a hundred years; though if he wastes all of that time without taking any steps toward reformation, he will be considered unworthy of life and will be cut off in the second death. (Isa. 65:20) But the obedient shall eat the good of the land (Isa. 1:19): "They shall build houses and inhabit them [There will not be so many houses to let in those days probably, but more improved and cultivated homesteads in which the owners shall take pleasure and comfort]; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people ["They shall renew their strength" – Isa. 40:31]; and mine elect [all the faithful and obedient then] shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall

not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed [the children] of the blessed of the Lord [the Church] and their offspring with them."

"And it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear" – so near will the Lord be, so mindful of all their interests.

"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together [The reference here may be to men formerly of wolf-like or lamb-like character, or to animals, or to both – the expression signifying in any case a reign of peace]; and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat [ – another expression similar to, "His enemies shall lick the dust," signifying the destruction of the serpent, or rather of Satan whom the serpent symbolizes]. They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all my holy mountain [Kingdom], saith the Lord." – Isa. 65:21-25.

Thus the birth of the true Zion will be cause for rejoicing among all who truly love righteousness: for, though it will first dash in pieces all their long cherished hopes, it is the dawn of real hope for all the world. It will humble all their pride, despoil them of all their cherished possessions and what they have come to esteem their rights, break down all their boasted institutions, civil, social and religious, and completely wreck all their order and all hope until they begin to see hope in the new order of things inaugurated by the Kingdom of God.

Yes, rejoice with Jerusalem, Zion, and be glad with her, all ye that love her, as well as all ye that mourn for her now and try to dissuade her from her course, not seeing the prize at the end of her life of faithful self-sacrifice; for soon her glory will appear, not only to her own exceeding joy, but also to the joy and blessing of all the families of the earth.

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