

THY LIGHT IS COME.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." – Isa. 60:1-3.

THE words of this prophecy have a double application, – first to spiritual Israel, and second to Israel after the flesh. The great and long-looked-for light is the Lord Jesus Christ, the light of the world; and the time indicated is the end or harvest of the Gospel age, when he comes in glory and power to shine as the sun in his Kingdom. That the prophecy had a partial fulfilment to fleshly Israel at our Lord's first advent is true. He indeed was the light and glory of Israel; but as a nation they knew not the time of their visitation (Luke 19:44): the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:5.) Consequently the glory of the Lord was not then seen upon Israel: they did not know their King, nor enter with him into his Kingdom, though the privilege was then offered to them. They did not arise and shine, and therefore darkness came upon them; and, as a nation, blinded to their highest interests, they stumbled into the ditch (Matt. 15:14), a great time of trouble, which, beginning with the destruction of their holy city and the complete wreck of their national polity, drove them out of their own land and left them as fugitives in every land and the subjects of more or less persecution even unto the present day.

All this reminds us very forcibly of the words of Jesus to them, – "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." (John 12:35,36.) But alas! Israel heeded not the light, nor the warning. It was as the Prophet had foretold (Isa. 1:3), "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

However, Behold (says Paul) the goodness as well as the severity of God: on them which fell from their high privileges, severity; but upon you Gentiles, goodness, if you heed and continue to walk in the light, but, if like them you become proud and self-righteous, you also will be cut off from the divine favor and left to stumble in darkness. – Rom. 11:22.

Indeed, that such would be the case with the masses of nominal spiritual Israel in the end of the Gospel age, as well as with fleshly Israel in the end of the Jewish age, was also foretold by the Prophet, who said, "And he shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to *both* the houses of Israel." (Isa. 8:14.) Again, in the end of this Gospel age, the Lord of the whole earth has come. He comes not for a sin-offering, as at the first advent, but he comes now in the plenitude of his kingly power to begin his glorious reign and to exalt his faithful Church as his bride and joint-heir to his throne and his glory. He comes while yet darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people, and the glad message to all his faithful saints is, "Arise, shine! for thy light is come." "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Observe that the Prophet calls upon the saints to shine now, and also tells of a glory about to be revealed in them. The thought of the passage is plainly that they have something to do with the shining to which they are exhorted, while the glory to be put upon them is apart from their own doing, a reward from God to the faithful ones who now diligently let their light shine for him.

Jesus said to his disciples in the beginning of the age, "Ye are the light of the world;" and so the true followers of Christ all through the age who have been with Jesus and learned of him have been the lights of the world. (Matt. 5:14-16.) But this prophecy, taking the standpoint of the end of the age, indicates that greater light is due here than at any previous time. And so we find it. Although the Lord has been enlightening and leading his people ever since the days of his first advent, yet now they are to arise and shine as never before. Within

these days of the Lord's presence (since 1874) the light of divine truth has been shining more brightly than ever, so that his people have been able to discover and understand God's deep designs, and to see in his mighty work a grand and benevolent plan of ages, fully worthy of the wisdom, power, justice and love of our God. To use another figure, the table of the Lord has been richly spread with all the bounties of the harvest season, and the Lord himself, according to his promise, is serving. – "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them." – Luke 12:37.

Well may the Church arise now and put on her beautiful garments; for very shortly she is to receive beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness. The time is come when she may lift up her head and rejoice, knowing that her deliverance draweth nigh. (Luke 21:28.) The exhortation to arise and shine is therefore to all who have been enlightened by the harvest message in these days of the Lord's presence. The prophet tells us that this truth which so fills our hearts with joy and gladness is nothing less than the glory of **[R2036 : page 221]** the Lord which is risen upon us. How blessed the thought, how precious the truth! The humblest saint who has been brought to a knowledge of it, and who has been thrilled with its blessed inspiration, may rejoice in the realization that the glory of the Lord has already risen upon him.

Is it indeed true that the glory of the Lord is risen upon this humble one who has to fight hard the fight of faith day by day to keep his mortal body in subjection to the mind of the spirit, and who realizes every moment that he stands only in the imputed righteousness of Christ, his own being but as filthy rags? Yes, it is even so; and the fact that the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, that it has thrilled thy soul with a joy unspeakable and full of glory even now, is a special evidence of his love and care for thee. And more, it is an earnest or foretaste of that fulness of glory and blessing promised a little further on, if we are

faithful to the light we now enjoy; if, with a holy zeal for God, we arise and let it shine – in our words, in our works and in our characters.

A few more days or years of cross-bearing and trial, a few more days of valiant and persistent warfare with the principalities and powers of darkness that conspire against us to bring us again into bondage to sin, a few more opportunities to tell the blessed tidings to those who sit in darkness, to bear our loving testimony to the power and grace of our God, and then, by and by, we shall shine in the glory of the Kingdom for the blessing of all the world; – "His glory *shall be seen* upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Let us therefore be faithful to the light; let us walk in the light while we have the light; for if we prove unfaithful to it, it will be withdrawn from us. If, after receiving it and being blessed by it, we fail to appreciate it, and seek for the satisfying portion elsewhere, thus plainly indicating our lack of appreciation, it will not continue with us.

While this harvest message comes to all the professed people of God with this stirring appeal, "Arise, shine!" it comes also with an inherent power to separate between the true and the false, the faithful and the unfaithful. Like a magnet, it attracts only its own kind. The spirit of God which is in the truth must also be in every one who receives it: all such, and only such, have an affinity for it and can be attracted by it; and the more they are filled with the spirit of God the more they will prize the treasure of divine wisdom and cling fast to it, notwithstanding the opposition that may be brought against them. Those who have less of the Lord's spirit may not hold to it so tightly, and unless they become filled, sooner or later, they will be overcome by opposition, either open or subtle, and will be swept away. There must be a very strong and close affinity for the magnet of truth to hold fast to it against all opposition. Those in whom the spirit of the world dwells, whether they be professed Christians or not, have no affinity for it, and are not drawn by it. It is no matter of surprise, therefore, that we find the large majority of professed Christians, who are really

worldlings, either indifferent or in opposition to the truth; for the nominal spiritual Israel, like fleshly Israel, is to stumble at this stumbling stone, and only the *remnant* of both houses shall be counted worthy of the Kingdom and its glory. Now, as in the end of the Jewish age, the masses of the professed people of God are blinded and stumbled because their hearts are not in the proper attitude to receive the blessings God has to bestow.

Another thought is prominent in this glowing prophecy and this cheering exhortation to arise and shine. The words remind us of our Lord's counsel to Mary, immediately after his resurrection. Overcome with joy she was inclined to linger in his presence; but gently he reminded her that the good news of his resurrection would be equally good to all the other disciples, and that it was her privilege to bear it to them. The time for his ascension to the Father was not yet, and he would meet with them all again. – John 20:17.

So now, while we are made to realize and to rejoice in the presence of our Lord, the prophet bids us be mindful of our brethren to whom this joy has not yet come, and to whom it is our privilege to bear these **[R2037 : page 221]** good tidings. All who are truly the Lord's faithful covenant people will recognize the glory of this harvest message; they will be attracted by it and rejoice in it. But since we cannot always discern the hearts to know who are the worthy ones, we must expect the repulses of many whose hearts are not yet in condition to receive it. But, nevertheless, let us arise and shine. Let us bear the blessed testimony wherever we have opportunity, especially to them who are of the household of faith.

After spiritual Zion has been glorified with Christ to shine as the sun in the Kingdom (Matt. 13:43) and that true light shines upon the nations, it will be first upon the house of Jacob – the return to them of divine favor, "mercy through your mercy" (Rom. 11:26-31); then this call will come also to them, "Arise shine, thy light is come!"
