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"THE TRUE LIGHT WHICH LIGHTETH EVERY MAN."

– DEC. 24. – ISA. 9:2-7. –

"Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." – Luke 2:11.

CHRISTMAS-TIDE always brings some lesson associated with our Savior and the great salvation, the gift of God, provided through him. This year the chosen lesson is most excellent and beautiful. Appropriately, the first verse of the chapter is omitted: in Leeser's Translation it constitutes the last verse of chapter 8.

Our lesson had no local and immediate application at the time of its delivery: it is strictly prophetic, as are indeed the preceding fifteen verses. We cannot even apply the lesson to the people and time of the first advent: its scope is far beyond the Jewish nation, and can only be applied to the worldwide blessings which follow the second coming of Christ and the establishment of his glorious Kingdom in power and great glory. Nevertheless, there is just a bare connection with the past in the expression, "Unto us a child is born" – thus indicating the humble beginning and earliest manifestation [R2550 : page 284] of the great light, the Sun of Righteousness, which has not yet arisen, but whose day-star is now shining in the hearts of the faithful. – 2 Pet. 1:19.

The two divisions of the first verse of the lesson in poetic form merely repeat the same thought with variations. The people that walk in darkness who are to see the great light are practically all mankind, for "gross darkness covers the people" – the exception, the very small minority, the Church, as our Lord declared, is "not of the world." (John 17:16.) This broad thought is emphasized by the next statement, for the whole world surely is "the land of the shadow of death:" "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" under the sentence or curse of death which, with its accompaniments

of pain and sorrow, casts a deep shadow in every heart and in every household.

Surely, the whole world needs this great light – the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord – the very light which the Apostle declares the world cannot now discern, because the eyes of their understanding are darkened by the misrepresentations and deceptions perpetrated by the god of this world, the prince of darkness. – 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:3.

The fact that this is expressed in the past tense does not signify that this light has already shined, even as the statement, "Unto us a child *is* born," did not signify the birth of Christ at a time prior to Isaiah's prophecy. It is merely a usual form of prophetic statement: the standpoint is taken away off in the future, and from that future standpoint the thing to be accomplished is stated as tho already done.

Here, then, we have a prophetic assurance of the great light of the knowledge of God coming to all mankind: and this, be it noted, is in fullest agreement with the testimony of John 1:9, that Christ "is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The fact that every man born into the world has not yet been enlightened by this great light, so far from disparaging the statement, gives us assurance that the time is coming when to him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, and all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, and knowing him have full responsibility or trial for everlasting life or everlasting death.

Verses 3-5 intimate the process by which the great change shall come, and the world be prepared for the shining of the great light – the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his beams. Scholars are divided in their opinions respecting a proper translation of the first sentence of the third verse. The majority seem to favor the translation given by the *Revised Version*, "Thou hast increased the nation, thou hast increased her joy." *Leeser's Translation* renders it, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, made great her joy." In harmony with the

context we must interpret this nation to be *the world of mankind* under the new administration of the Millennial Kingdom; for the kingdoms of this world will then become the kingdoms of our Lord, God's Anointed, and many nations shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." – Rev. 11:15; Isa. 2:3.

Thus, instead of the Lord's empire being a typical one over a little nation of Israelites, as in the day of Isaiah's prophecy, it will be the antitypical one in which Immanuel shall be King over all the earth, and his name great to the ends of the earth.

It is the joy of this great people that is described: it will not merely be a quiet joy of satisfaction, but an hilarious joy, as of men who are in the midst of plenty, in a harvest season; and as men rejoicing when dividing the fruits of victory. But what will be the cause of the rejoicing? The answer is given. Because from off their shoulder the great burden has been removed: the burden of sin and its curse will have been removed, and the rod of the oppressor, Satan, will be broken, and he himself then will be a captive, no longer permitted to oppress and deceive and blind mankind. – Rev. 20:2.

An illustration of the process of the deliverance is given: "As in the days of Median." The suggestion obviously is that as Israel was delivered in the day of Midian by Gideon and his little band, armed with trumpets and pitchers with lights in them, – by the blowing of the trumpets, the breaking of the pitchers and the shining out of the lights – discomfiting the Midianites, so that they slew one another with a great slaughter, so likewise will be the deliverance by which the Lord will bring in the new dispensation. (Judges 7:19-25.) Our Lord Jesus is the antitypical Gideon, and his "little flock," the Church of this Gospel age, the "elect," are the antitype of Gideon's little army. And it will be through the intervention of these (on the other side of the veil) that the hosts of sin and the present enginery of evil

will be utterly discomfited and work its self-destruction through anarchy, etc., in the great time of trouble rapidly drawing near.

This great time of trouble is briefly yet graphically described in the fifth verse as being more severe, more intense, than all preceding troubles, for it is declared that all such victories are expected to be with tumult and bloody garments, but this shall be with a more furious destruction, best likened to a consuming of fuel in the fire. And it will be noticed that the fury of the final conflict of this age, which shall transfer the rule to our Prince Immanuel, is everywhere likened to a *fire* – throughout the prophecies and in our Lord's parables [R2550 : page 285] – evidently because of the intensity of the trouble and its destructiveness.

Then comes (vss. 6 and 7) the explanation from the Lord's side of how all these things are of his provision and supervision – beginning with the birth of our Lord as the babe born in Bethlehem; next presenting him as God's Son, *given* on our behalf, – his sacrifice beginning at Jordan and culminating at Calvary. "Wherefore," as the Apostle says, because of his obedience unto death, "him hath God highly exalted and given him a name above every [other] name," – honor, dominion and power above all others, next to his own.

The change of dispensation will be ushered in because the Father's "times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:19-21) will have come, – the time for Christ to receive the honor, glory and dominion promised him, with which he shall fulfil all the gracious things predicted by God through the prophets: hence the declaration is that then "the government shall be upon his shoulder" – the mantle of authority shall rest upon him. And when he shall thus assume the control of earth's affairs, his character of love and justice, his wisdom, and the all-power in heaven and in earth given unto him, insure all the faithful that his reign will be a time of blessing, of peace and of joy to all who love righteousness and truth; and equally a time

of burning destruction against all who shall sin wilfully after having been brought to a knowledge of the truth. – Heb. 12:26.

His names, his titles, representing the gracious things of which he is the representative, are brought to our attention: to all the world of mankind he will then be (and the Church, his body, with him) "Wonderful" – Great – beyond the power of human comprehension, as he is indeed the express image of the Father's person. He will be the "Counselor," whose instructions in righteousness will be satisfactory and respected by all the world of mankind seeking a return to divine favor and full restitution. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hear that Teacher, that Counselor, shall be cut off from among the people. (Acts 3:23.) He shall be called "Mighty God," or Mighty Mighty One, for indeed in him shall rest all the power and authority of the All-mighty One, Jehovah. He shall **[R2551 : page 285]** be called the "Father Everlasting," because in truth he shall be a Father unto the race, a *Life-Giver* to all who will accept life under the terms of the New Covenant, sealed with his own precious blood. Adam, the original father of humanity, through his sin and under its sentence, failed to give lasting life to his race, and death destroyed all his offspring; but the restitution life which our Lord will give, to as many as will receive it upon his terms, will be an everlasting life, and hence he, as the Giver of this life to all, will be an Everlasting Father. He shall be called the "Prince of Peace," for, altho his empire will be established by a smiting of the nations with a rod of iron, and breaking them in pieces as a potter's vessel, in the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known, nevertheless, every blow will be struck in the interest of peace, and so his entire reign will further the ends of righteousness and peace, even tho to the very end thereof there shall from time to time be destructions of the wicked. – Isa. 65:20; Rev. 20:9,14,15.

Leeser's Translation reads thus: – "The Prince of Peace for promoting the increase of the government and for peace without end upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it and

to support it through justice and righteousness from henceforth and unto eternity: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

In this last verse of the lesson the Millennial Kingdom is associated with the typical Kingdom of David. We are to remember, however, the statement that David sat upon the throne of the Kingdom of the Lord – he and his kingdom were typical. The name, David, signifies "beloved," and our Lord Jesus himself was proclaimed as the real David – "This is *my Beloved* Son, in whom I am well pleased." God hath appointed him heir of all things, and he is David's Lord, as David himself testified. – Heb. 1:2; Matt. 22:41-45.

We fear that there are many Christians who have lost faith, not only in the prophetic promises, but in our Lord's and the apostles' exposition of them, and that such frequently pray merely with a lip service, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." But so much the more as we discern such blindness on every hand, such lack of faith, let us, the eyes of whose understandings have been opened by the Lord's mercy, be the more faithful, the more circumspect, and the more confident, remembering, in the words of this lesson, that an abundant fulfilment is assured, for "The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform all this."

REVIEW OF 1899. – DEC. 31.

Golden Text. – "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." – Psa. 103:2.

The end of one year and the beginning of another is a most favorable occasion for circumspection and retrospection.

We trust that as each reader reviews the year just closing he will be able to repeat our Golden Text appreciatively, – with the spirit and with the understanding also. One of the least expensive offerings we can present to the Lord our God, and yet one which he will appreciate very highly, is thanksgiving – for mercies past and present. The

ungrateful are disdained among men, and we may well suppose are far from pleasing in the sight of the Almighty. While every creature throughout the world might find some cause for thankfulness and gratitude and praise, how much more should we who have received so abundantly of the riches of divine [R2551 : page 286] grace in the knowledge of his truth – the plan of the ages. We may well apply to ourselves on this occasion the words of our dear Redeemer, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and many righteous persons have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

We said that thanksgivings were cheap offerings; but whoever presents to the Lord real thanksgiving with lips of praise will follow his lip service with something more substantial; and this is intimated in our Golden Text by the words, "O my soul!" – the appeal is not merely to the lips, but to the entire being. And so we find it with ourselves and others today: whoever is truly thankful to the Lord and offers him praise, remembering his benefits, will seek to render substantial thanks also in deeds that will be acceptable and pleasing to the Lord.

While prayers, adorations and praises are the most direct offerings of "incense" to the Lord, nevertheless, he has so arranged matters that we cannot offer these sincerely and acceptably except as we have his spirit: and if we have his spirit, we will at the same time that we offer this incense on the Golden Altar be offering also upon the brazen altar in the "Court" good works – "doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith." – Gal. 6:10.

The close of the year is an excellent time also for the making of new resolutions for the year to come, and on the present occasion there is an added force from the fact that the year before us will be the last one of the century. Let us, beloved brethren, make plenty of

good resolves respecting what we shall be willing to be, to do, to suffer, in fellowship with our Lord; that we may by his grace make of it the best year thus far of our lives – the year of largest hopes, of largest endeavors, and by the Lord's grace of largest successes in self-sacrifice, in overcoming the world and its spirit, in vanquishing self and the desires of the flesh, in resisting the Adversary, and in glorifying our Lord and blessing his people.
