

"THE PRINCE OF PEACE."

– ISAIAH 9:1-7. – DECEMBER 25. –

Golden Text: – "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." – R.V.

EVEN though Christmas day is not the real anniversary of our Lord's birth, but more properly the annunciation day or the date of his human begetting (Luke 1:28), nevertheless, since the celebration of our Lord's birth is not a matter of divine appointment or injunction, but merely a tribute of respect to him, it is not necessary for us to quibble particularly about the date. We may as well join with the civilized world in celebrating the grand event on the day which the majority celebrate – "Christmas day." The lesson for the occasion is a most happy choice, fitting well to the series of lessons it follows.

The first verse seems much better translated in the Revised Version, thus: "But there will be no gloom in her that was in anguish. In former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations." The Prophet penned these words probably shortly after the ten-tribe kingdom known as Ephraim had gone into captivity to Assyria. Zebulun and Naphtali were the names of the principal districts of Ephraim; and Isaiah, prophetically looking from those desolated lands of his time, under the guidance of the holy Spirit, points out that in the latter time a great blessing is coming to those very lands.

It was centuries after Isaiah's prophecy that our dear Redeemer appeared among men and spent most of his time, did most of his mighty works, and performed most of his mighty miracles in these lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, called Galilee, which in the time of Isaiah had been denuded of its Jewish population and had been settled by Gentile emigrants, "Galilee of the Gentiles." Subsequently these

Gentiles gathered more particularly in the vicinity of the city of Samaria, and became known as Samaritans, and, noting the hopes of the Israelites, were inclined to claim a certain share in the blessings belonging to the people into whose lands they had been introduced. The Jews, however, disowned them as being still Gentiles, and would have no dealings with the Samaritans, as the Apostle pointed out.

Our Lord himself instructed the apostles to go not in the way of the Gentiles nor into any city of the Samaritans [R3468 : page 365] to announce him, declaring that he was not sent to any but the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He again declared to one of these Samaritans, "Ye worship ye know not what: we [the Jews] know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22.) Outside of the Samaritan districts all of Galilee became repopulated with Jews, though they represented generally the less noble class, so that it was rather as a mark of disrespect that our Lord and the apostles were called Galileans, Nazareth of Galilee being our Lord's home in his youth – a dis-esteemed city, as in the expression, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Our Lord indeed was born in Bethlehem, a more honorable city. Under divine providence he was taken to Nazareth, to the intent that a certain amount of odium might attach to him and to his cause. Thus often the Lord permits some unsavory influence to attach to the Truth, to the intent that none may receive his message except from the love of the Truth – that none should be influenced to receive it from any earthly consideration.

THE LIGHT SHINED IN THE DARK VALLEY.

The second verse of the lesson fitted well to Galilee: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." As our Lord declared, "The light shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." He was the light of the world and was in the world and the world knew him not. But there is a higher and deeper and broader sense in which these words are to be understood – they apply to all peoples

who have been favored with the opening of the eyes of their understanding during this Gospel age.

The people of Galilee in the day of our Lord's personal ministry, and other parts of the earth since with a similar humble class of people, have more or less had amongst them representatives of the true light, and in every case the light has shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not, as our Lord declared to be the case. Only a few appreciate this shining now because, as the Apostle declared, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not" – the eyes of their understanding are so darkened by false doctrines, misunderstanding and superstition that they cannot see those glorious things which can now be seen only by the eye of faith, the eyes of their understanding being opened.

That the prophecy was not confined to the people of Galilee is evident from the last clause of the second verse, "They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The land of the shadow of death is the whole world, for the shadow of death has been on the whole world ever since the first transgression in Eden, ever since the curse or sentence of death was pronounced against our race. As the Prophet David describes it, the Lord's true people are blessed even while in the present valley and under the shadow of death: he says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me." It is to this class who walk with the Lord, who trust him, that the true light now shines – not as the glorious Sun of Righteousness, as it will shine by and by when the Millennial Kingdom is established, but merely as the little lamp, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, a lantern to my footsteps."

This lamp shines not for the world but for those who are the Lord's special people, to whom the light of his revelation, the lamp of enlightenment is granted. All these thus walking in this valley, under the guidance and care of the great Captain of our Salvation, have indeed seen a great light in him, have seen a light which the world

sees not. But, thank God, the world's time to see the great light is shortly coming, drawing nigh. As soon as the present work of selecting the Church, the Bride, the [R3469 : page 365] body members, is complete, these – changed, glorified – shall constitute the great Sun of Righteousness to shine forth upon the world, the light of divine Truth, the message of divine love and mercy and instruction in righteousness. These – Christ the Head and the Church his body – shall be the great Teacher of the world, who shall instruct all, and shall bring as many as are willing into full fellowship and perfection – destroying the unwilling and unworthy in the Second Death.

JACOB'S RESCUE NEAR.

But evidently the Prophet's vision, while it glanced upon the preaching of our Lord and the apostles in Galilee, and glanced down through the Gospel age and noted how this light glinted here and there as a wonderful "lamp," nevertheless rested not until it reached the very end of this age. There in prophetic vision Isaiah seems to see the end of Jacob's trouble – Israel's deliverance from the blindness that has been upon her, her acceptance of the Lord as the Messiah at the time mentioned by another Prophet, when the Lord would pour upon them the spirit of prayer and supplication and they should look upon him whom they had pierced and mourn for him – at the time mentioned by the Apostle Paul, when the fulness of the Gentiles having come in (the full number of the Gentiles to complete the elect number of the Church), divine mercy shall go forth from the Church to bless the world and shall rest first of all upon Israel according to the flesh, "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy." – Rom. 11:31.

The third and fourth verses of our lesson, we believe, are near fulfilment. In the Revised Version it reads, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased her joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his

oppressor, thou hast broken as in the day of Midian." The nation of Israel is much increased today, the estimate at the present time being between ten and twelve millions. Their joy is not yet accomplished because this great deliverance here mentioned has not yet been accomplished. It is to be accomplished in the day of trouble, shortly after October, 1914, we believe. The reference here to their deliverance being similar to that in the day of Midian signifies that, as in the days of Midian the Lord specially manifested divine [R3469 : page 366] power by which Gideon and a handful with him smote an immense army and delivered Israel from the oppressor, so here in the end of this age the glorified Lord and his glorified Church, the little flock, the antitype of Gideon and his band, will deliver Israel with a similar mighty manifestation of divine power.

This coming deliverance is mentioned particularly in the prophecy of Zechariah, as follows: – "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled and the women ravished: And half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle [the ancient time when the Lord worked miracles for Israel's deliverance as at Midian]. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." – Zech. 14:1-4.

The fifth verse seems to be more intelligently rendered in the Revised Version thus: "For all the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire." The thought seems to be that at that time will come the end of warfare, as the Scriptures have declared. The time of trouble with which the Millennium will be introduced will be the means by which the Lord will overthrow all the powers of evil, as it is written, "He shall cause wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." Under the righteous reign which will then follow men will learn war

no more, but will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. At the present time the reverse of all this is in operation, nor can we hope for a change such as the Lord's Word here and elsewhere predicts by any other power than that from above. Hence our prayer as our Lord instructed and in harmony with our hopes, "Thy Kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

THE GOVERNMENT UPON HIS SHOULDERS.

As the verses three to five indicate the coming joys and blessings and cessation of war, verse six points out how this would be accomplished. This is shown by its introduction with the word "for." This verse is the Golden Text of our lesson, its center, its pivot point. It goes back of the promised blessings to point out how they will be introduced. (1) A child will be born – a Son will be given – a gift from God. (2) Passing over his earthly ministry and faithfulness, whereby the Lord Jesus was tested and proven worthy of the favors here prophetically assured him as the overcomer, we have the declaration that the government will be upon his shoulders. This is an old-style figurative way of declaring that the authority and honor will be laid upon the Lord Jesus. The same thought is still carried out in the armies of the world, whose generals have upon their shoulders epaulets in which the dignity of their rank is noted, is indicated. So upon our Lord Jesus the heavenly Father has placed the dignity and responsibility of being the great King who in due time, as the Father's representative, as the great glorified Mediator, shall reign for a thousand years to restore order in the world, to put down all insubordination, to destroy every enemy of righteousness and truth and to exalt every one who is the friend of these divine principles.

It is worthy of note that this authority or government is conferred upon our Lord before he assumes the various offices subsequently made: remarkably few recognize the authority of this great Captain of our Salvation whom God has set forth. Only comparatively few

recognize him truly and render him obedience and refuse not him who speaketh from heaven. These few have the eyes of their understanding opened and see what the others do not see, and the ears of their understanding opened that they hear and comprehend what others do not comprehend. To them the Master is the Father's representative and all in all even now – even before the time has come for him to take his great power and reign, even before he has established truth and righteousness in the world. By the eye of faith they see him, recognize him, worship, adore, obey and follow him.

KNOWLEDGE OF HIS GLORY WORLD-WIDE.

But our lesson implies much more than such an acknowledgment of our Lord Jesus by the Church. It implies a world-wide knowledge, as it is written, "Unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father." The government or authority is not laid upon his shoulders in vain, and the fact that he has not exercised this authority in now nearly two thousand years' triumph and ascension up on high is merely in accord with the scriptural declaration that the Father has a due time set at which the Son shall take unto himself his great power and reign, and in association with himself the Church, the little flock, now being gathered out from the world during this Gospel age.

The time when the Lord shall manifest to the world his government, his authority, his rule, is represented in Daniel 12:1,2, by the words, "stand up." "At that time shall Michael [another name for our glorious Lord] stand up, and there shall be a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one found written in the book." Our Lord will not have the authority in vain. When he shall have the authority he will use it, and one of the first works, we are assured, will be the suppression of evil – not only the suppression of Satan, the prince of this world, who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and who, we are assured, will be bound at the beginning

of that Millennial reign, but additionally all the works of the devil, all institutions of evil, moral, social, financial, that are now injuring the world of mankind and co-operating in effecting the groaning and travailing of the whole creation. All these will be suppressed as soon as the proper time shall come, and he upon whose shoulders the power and authority have been placed shall take unto himself [R3469 : page 367] his great power and shall begin his reign. No longer, we may be sure, will any evil be licensed; no longer will the making of spirituous liquors be permitted, authorized and licensed, nor the sale of these nor any other harmful thing be allowed to do injury in God's holy Kingdom. – Isa. 11:9.

It will be then, at that time, that the whole world shall begin to recognize the great King whom God will thus set in the throne of the world's dominions to rule it, to order it to subdue it, to lift it up out of sin and degradation and to bring it into harmony again with God as it was before sin entered.

"COUNSELLOR," MIGHTY ONE, FATHER.

The great Mediator, the Christ, "Prophet, Priest and King," Judge, the Seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed, shall have various names; his character and work shall be recognized from various standpoints. He will be the Wonderful in that in himself he will manifest more than others the Father's character and likeness and nature; he will be Counsellor, Teacher, Instructor, Helper, Guide, for the whole world of mankind; he will be Mighty God – the one with all power and authority to deal with mankind throughout the Millennial age.

There will be no appeal from his righteous laws, regulations and decisions because the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son: the whole matter will be left in his hands. From another standpoint he will be the Everlasting Father; having purchased the life of Adam and his race with the sacrifice of his own human life, our Lord having been granted a new life in his resurrection, will have at

his disposal the life which he bought in the [R3470 : page 367] sacrificing of his own in such measure as will be sufficient to supply every member of Adam's race. Each member of our race as he shall respond to the knowledge that shall then be filling the whole earth, may receive life more and more abundantly from the glorified Christ – everlasting life, the life that was lost in Adam's disobedience and that was redeemed by Christ's sacrifice of himself.

The one from whom all life for the world must proceed is fitly called the Father of the world, since the word father signifies life-giver; and since this Father gives life everlasting, it is eminently proper that he should be called the Father of everlasting life or the Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace is another of his titles, but this one evidently will not be appropriate to him until, toward the close of the Millennial age, he shall have accomplished the putting down of everything obnoxious to divine righteousness, the subjugation of all things to himself – until he shall have finished the use of the iron rod in smiting the nations in dashing them to pieces as a potter's vessel. Then it will be seen that the motive beyond all this activity against unrighteousness was the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the bringing in of everlasting peace, and it will be seen that the title well fits our great King, Prince of Peace.

NO END OF RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT.

The seventh verse of our lesson gives another precious assurance, and that is that this Kingdom once being attained by our Lord will never be surrendered to another, never pass into other hands. Of his government and of his peace which he will establish there will be no end. Not only Israel, but all mankind have been witnesses that the best of kings as well as the worst of kings have at times surrendered their dominions, and that the best of kings might be followed by the worst. How appropriate then the suggestion that when the Kingdom of this great King of kings and Lord of lords shall have conquered the world and have subdued all things unto him and

brought all things into harmony with the divine will, it shall never again be overturned by evil.

The expression, "upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with judgment and righteousness from henceforth even forever; the zeal of the Lord shall perform this," signifies that this great Kingdom which our Lord Jesus at his second advent will establish – his Church as members of his body, members of his Kingdom class, his Bride associated with him – will be the outcome, the antitype of that which was typically presented to Israel in the kingdom, the government of David. As previously seen, the name David signifies "Beloved," and the David who was the first king on Israel's throne, and of whom it was said that he sat upon the throne of the Lord, was merely a type, a figure of the greater David, the Anointed, the Messiah. Jesus Christ, the first Lord of all, and the Church his body associated with him, constitute the antitypical David, the antitypical Beloved of the Lord, whose kingdom shall be an everlasting Kingdom "henceforth even forevermore."

UNENDING KINGDOM TRANSFERRED.

The Apostle points out (I Cor. 15:28) that, at the close of his thousand-year reign, our Lord (his Church associated with him) will abdicate the throne of earth. Having accomplished the work which the Father has set apart to be accomplished by the Anointed in this Millennial reign, at its close the entire authority, with the world in complete subjection to the divine law and fully restored to the divine likeness and all wilful transgressors cut off, will be surrendered to the Father's hands, and in accordance with his pre-arrangement will be redelivered to mankind, that the perfect human family, in the image and likeness of God, may rule the world in harmony with the divine regulations. But the government will never cease, because the government which Christ establishes is the divine government, and having given up this special work, the Christ will be even more

particularly associated with the Father in his throne in the general government of the universe; and since the government of earth is merely a part of the government of the universe, it will still be in that particular sense under the supervision of the glorified Christ.

The zeal of the Lord shall perform this. It will not be the arm of man nor the zeal of man, however good or well meaning, which could bring to pass such wonderful changes as those which the Lord has pointed out. The Lord himself will accomplish it; he will put all things into subjection to the Son – all things, the Apostle explains, except himself, for he is excepted who thus puts all things under the Son. – I Cor. 15:27.

From this standpoint, looking back over the history of the world, we get a grand view of the divine power and wisdom and justice and love. We see how God has been continually overruling in respect to the efforts of man, to the intent that ultimately, without interfering with the free moral agency of any, every man of the whole race of Adam shall be fully and thoroughly tested and proven respecting his loyalty to the Lord, and thus respecting his worthiness of life eternal. How glorious is the divine plan! What wonder is there that with its accomplishment every voice in heaven and in earth shall be heard expressing praise and thankfulness, glory, honor, dominion and might to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb?

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