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"THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

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"Text: — "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

— Matthew 4:16.

IN THE BIBLE symbols light stands as the representative of God, of Christ, of the Church, of Truth, of influences for righteousness, which by and by as the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in its beams for the cure of all the masses of the earth. It will scatter the darkness of sin, ignorance and superstition — the works of the Prince of Darkness, who will then "be bound for a thousand years that he may deceive the nations no more until the thousand years are finished." Of the heavenly Father we read, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

Of Jesus we read, "I am the light of the world." Of the Church in her present condition we read, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." "Hide not your light under a bushel, but set it on a candlestick that it may give light unto all that are in the house." Nevertheless, "The darkness hateth the light, neither cometh to the light," and "the whole world lieth in the Wicked One" — in darkness. Notwithstanding the faithfulness of Jesus and the few light-bearers enlightened with the Holy Spirit of which they are begotten, still "darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the heathen."

This same thought pervades the Scriptures from first to last, namely, that for six thousand years, from the time [R4988 : page 86] of the entrance of sin to the second coming of Jesus, the world will be subject to a reign of sin and death — it will be under a pall of darkness, ignorance, superstition, sin, etc. The only ones who will see the path of righteousness distinctly will be those guided by the

"lantern" – God's Word. They are represented as saying, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a lantern to my footsteps." St. Peter, writing to the Church from the same standpoint, declares, "We (the Church) have a more sure Word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn." – Psa. 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19.

The Prince of Darkness has been in command for centuries. The only lights of the past were the noble Prophets of the Jewish line whose lights affected few in their own nation, and were not discernible at all amongst the heathen world. John the Baptist, we are told, was a burning and shining light, and Jesus was a still more brilliant light, and His faithful few during the past eighteen centuries have shined forth, reflecting their Master's light. But all of these have had comparatively little influence in the world. It still lies in the Wicked One – in darkness, seeing not, neither understanding Divine things; it is still "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God."

A BETTER DAY COMING

Our text tells of a better day sure to come. It is not sure to come because of the operation of the evolutionary law, for the natural law would seem to contradict such a thought. Darkness leads on to darkness more intense, and while light begets light, darkness begets darkness, and the masses are in the darkness, and in the Wicked One, the Prince of Darkness. Never, then, might we hope for the abolishment of darkness except in the way in which God has foretold it – through the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom – through the shining forth of the Son of Righteousness – the Church in glory. – Matt. 13:43.

Our text is a quotation from the Old Testament; it had a beginning of its fulfilment in our Savior and in the Apostles. The people of Palestine, long in doubt, uncertainty, etc., saw a great light in Jesus and His teachings. And throughout this Gospel Age, for more than eighteen centuries, this great Light has been exercising a feeble

influence amongst men. The Light itself has been pure – the Divine Word and the principles of Divine righteousness. But, alas! few have been faithful in receiving the light in its purity and in reflecting it forth upon others.

In general the light has been corrupted by human selfishness, by sin. As a consequence the name Christian today does not stand for all the blessed light and truth and grace and faithfulness to God and to the principles of love which the Master showed forth and inculcated. Instead the name Christian today is borne by about four hundred millions of humanity, many of whom, judged by the Divine standard of their "fruits," are children of the Wicked One, children of darkness, who merely use the garment of light, the name Christian, as a heavenly livery whereby to appease their own consciences and to increase their opportunity for selfishness and acquisition, quite contrary to the Leader whom they profess to be following, "the True Light."

"WHICH LIGHTETH EVERY MAN"

The Apostle declares that Jesus "is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:9.) The expression, "true light," implies that there are false or imitation lights, and of these we know that there are many – lights of heathendom and lights of Christendom. The only true light, however, is that which shone forth in our Savior's teachings and example. It has thus far enlightened only a few, a "little flock." These, like their Master, are urged to let their light shine before men that others may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him – that they are His disciples, His followers, bearing, in His footsteps, the same light which shone forth from Him.

After eighteen centuries of experience of the light battling with the darkness, and at times being almost quenched thereby, we might well ask, what hope is there that this prophecy will ever be fulfilled – that Jesus, as the Light of the world, will enlighten every man born into the world? The Bible answers that God will fulfil this very matter

in His own time, but that God's time cannot be hastened – that before the world will be enlightened, a saintly class, the Church, the Bride of Christ, must be enlightened, and must be completed and glorified together with her Lord.

FOR ONE THOUSAND YEARS THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL SHINE FORTH

Then, and not until then, will the Savior and His Church in glory be the great Sun of Righteousness which will arise over the earth, and shine forth for the healing of the people, for the scattering of the darkness of sin and the lies of error – the bringing of life, peace, joy and blessing to all who will accept the favor in harmony with the Divine requirements; but to smite down and utterly destroy the Night, and those who will still love darkness, and would corrupt the earth.

For a thousand years the glorious Sun of Righteousness (Christ and the Church, His Bride), will shine out. The work will be thorough and complete. Adam and his every child will be fully brought to a knowledge of the Truth, and will enjoy the blessed opportunity of coming back into harmony with God, by the restitution process, of which St. Peter tells us in Acts 3:19-23. This will not mean that the world will ever become members of the Bride class, or ever attain the spirit nature. It means restitution to the condition first enjoyed by Adam, lost by sin, but redeemed by the sacrifice finished at Calvary. It means human perfection to all the willing and obedient of Adam's race through the heavenly Second Adam and the heavenly Second Eve.

It means a world-wide Paradise, filled with the blessings of the Lord, who has promised that the earth, as His footstool, shall be made glorious. It means that, with the destruction of the wilfully disobedient, this earth will be like heaven. The Savior's prayer will reach fulfilment; God's will shall be done on earth even as it is done in heaven. This in turn will mean that "every knee will bow and every tongue confess," both of the things in heaven and of the things on

earth, to the glory of God. And this signifies that there shall be no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying on earth, even as none of these things are in heaven.

Then our text will have most ample fulfilment – all mankind shall see the great Light which God has provided; even those "in the shadow of death" must come forth, that all may be enlightened by this "true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." O, the happy day that is coming to our poor, sin-cursed earth! There shall be no more curse, thank God! Instead of the curse shall be the Divine blessing; "and every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth shall be heard saying, 'Praise and glory and honor and dominion and might be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, forever'"!
