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## "COME AND LET US RETURN"

– NOVEMBER 10. – ISAIAH 5:7-16. –

**"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame." – Vs. 11.**

TODAY'S LESSON had its primary force in connection with the affairs of Natural Israel in the days of the Prophet. But when we remember that Natural Israel types Christendom we find a value in this lesson very pertinent to our time. As the Lord called Israel His vineyard so did He with Christendom. "And He looked for judgment [justice], but, behold, oppression; for righteousness [equity] and, behold, a cry" of distress. As to the national cry and the reason for it, see verse eight, which reads:

"Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" Here we perceive that a spirit of selfishness prevailed in Isaiah's day, as it does today; as then property was disposed to accumulate in the hands of the more successful, so it is today. As then landlordism took possession of vast areas, neglectful of the fact that "the earth hath the Lord given unto the children of men," and not merely to a few of them, so is it today.

Only by the most strenuous laws, and in some cases revolution, have the people maintained a hold of considerable [R5112 : page 314] portions of the earth. The French Revolution broke up the large holdings there; special laws have thrown open the lands of Ireland. In the United States large corporations have grasped immense bodies of land, some of which unlawfully seized have been restored to the people for a more equitable distribution. As in Isaiah's day, many of the wealthy seemed to ignore the rights of the people and to be indifferent to their necessities, so it is today. We are not to overlook the fact that there are many noble, generous souls amongst the rich, as well as

amongst the poor; we are merely calling attention to the parallelism between the conditions in Israel and the conditions here in our day.

### **THEN A TIME OF TROUBLE**

Divine disapproval of human hard-heartedness, selfishness and neglect of poorer brethren, and the forgetfulness of the fact that we are all children of one blood and amenable to the laws of the same Creator, brought upon the Israelites the Divine chastisements, judgments. We believe that the Scriptures with equal clearness tell of a great "time of trouble" now impending over the world, but especially over Christendom – a time particularly mentioned by Saint James, saying, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the misery that shall come upon you." – James 5:1.

This trouble is mentioned in today's study, verse 9: "The Lord of Hosts said in my hearing, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair [houses and families], without inhabitant." If we rightly appreciate what the Scriptures foresaw respecting times not far ahead of us, we will see that many of the great and rich will be in a sad plight in their country-side homes, as will be some of the poorer in the congested cities, for the time of trouble, it is declared, will be upon all. The Prophet proceeds to indicate that shortage of crops will have much to do with the trouble: "Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah."

Never before has the world been so amply fortified against all peculiarities of conditions. Drouth and famine in one part may be relieved by the surplus of another part; nevertheless, we are to remember that the entire situation is in the Divine hand, and that if a shortage of food supply should now come to pass it would indicate a Divine intention in the matter, more than at any time in the world's history.

## MUSIC, REVELRY, INTOXICATION

The text given us for today's lesson comes next in our study. It implies that in the days of Isaiah's prophecy many of the rich indulged themselves in intoxicating liquors, music, revelry, etc., to their own injury as well as to the neglect of their responsibilities to God. They asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" even as Cain asked this question. By their accumulated wealth they had more than heart could wish, while others had insufficient and were needy. Their brilliancy of intellect and good fortune in life enabled them to triumph over the curse, which reads: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken." – Gen. 3:19.

But this victory gave them time, for which they were also responsible. Instead of using that time for the general blessing of their fellowmen, and their money for the general uplift of humanity, they accumulated houses and lands, etc., and drank constantly and excessively to their injury. Could they wonder that such a course would not have Divine approval? Could they wonder that all these things would bring upon them some disaster?

And how about today? is it the same? We answer, Yes and No. With many it is the same exactly, but with a considerable number of the wealthy of our day it is very different, we are glad to say. Continually we have evidences of the noble rich, as well as of the noble poor. Continually we have evidences that some of the wealthy consider their possessions as a trust from the Almighty to be used in His service, to be used for the sake of humanity, for its uplift, its comfort. Nearly every quarter of Christendom can boast of some such characters, but alas, they are comparatively few. The majority of the rich, like the majority of the poor, are selfish to the core.

It is in this direction that we are to look for the danger which the Scriptures declare to be imminent. When the selfish rich and the selfish poor shall join issue in a great struggle, as the Bible clearly declares they will do, then the world will see the time of trouble prophesied –

"such as never was since there was a nation" – a time of trouble which Jesus declares will never be again, because following that great trouble, upon the ashes of the present civilization, Immanuel, Messiah, the Son of the Highest, will establish the Kingdom of God, the rule of righteousness under the whole heavens, for the blessing of all the families of the earth, the rich, the poor.

## **THE OPERATION OF GOD'S HANDS**

God's complaint in verse 12 is that the rich in their feasting and music and selfish aggregation of wealth regarded not the work of the Lord, neither considered the operation of His hands. In applying this to our day, let it not be thought that we are objecting that the wealthy do not contribute sufficiently for the maintenance of the various denominations of Christendom.

The thought we gather is that God would have the prosperous people of our day take a broad view of His work, of humanity in general. He would have them concentrate their mental powers and force of character, not upon the personal aggregation of wealth, but upon generous schemes for the blessing and uplifting of the entire race. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof"; "He hath given it to the children of men." Ultimately, according to the Scriptures, He intends that the world as a whole is to share, upon a basis of equality, all of earth's advantages.

Thus Socialism, according to the Bible, will be the ultimate condition of the earth in which all mankind will receive a blessing. Socialists, not aware of this teaching of God's Word, these promises of the future, or if aware of them doubting them, propose to take over in the interest of all mankind the great blessings which are now in the hands of the comparatively few. To us their schemes appear dangerous, impracticable. To us it appears, as the Scriptures indicate, that failing to accomplish their benevolent designs, Socialists will become bitter anarchists, and plunge themselves and the whole world into the most awful trouble ever known.

But what an opportunity is now slipping through the fingers of some of the very wealthy – an opportunity to join in with the noblest and best of the Socialists and help to lead the masses of the people, not toward anarchy, but away from it – toward the conditions which God's Word and the principles of Justice and righteousness set before us as the proper conditions – the ideal conditions!

Among the many wealthy people of our day are some multi-millionaires, who could accomplish much for mankind, and who, indeed, have already accomplished much, and who have the wealth necessary and those hearts, we believe, are longing for an opportunity to do good; but **[R5112 : page 315]** doubtless the opportunity will pass unimproved; the time of trouble foretold will fall upon the race.

We must admit, in any event, that even if Socialism were established in the world it could not be maintained in any degree of perfection except by men thoroughly converted to God – men who would feel their responsibility to God and to men. In other words, what we need is the conversion of the world, not merely to an outward bowing of the knee, but to a heart-harmony with God and the principles of His righteousness.

Will this ever come? Ah, yes! The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it! But it cannot come through any power of ours. We can favor it, advocate it, and point toward it, but, individually, those who love righteousness and who see the way of the Lord are so insignificant that they cannot accomplish what they would for their fellows. "Wait ye upon Me, saith the Lord, until that day!" "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." – Zeph. 3:8,9. **[R5113 : page 315]**

In His own time, following the great time of trouble, God will humble the world. Meantime the Elect saints will be glorified, and with Messiah, as His Bride, constitute the long-promised Kingdom of God for the blessing of humanity. Then Satan shall be bound and all the

good influences of righteousness and truth and knowledge shall be let loose for the blessing of the world.

### **"HELL HATH ENLARGED HERSELF"**

The Lord tells us that because of these conditions His people are in captivity, not knowing how to help themselves, lacking knowledge, and their honorable men are famished, weak, perplexed, ignorant of the proper course; and the multitude who rely upon them are also thirsty. This is the famine elsewhere mentioned, not for bread, nor for water, but for a hearing of the Message of the Lord, the Gospel of Messiah's Kingdom, which is the very Message that all need to hear.

On account of the same conditions, "Hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it." Not the hell of eternal torment taught in our various creeds is here meant, but the Bible hell, the grave, the state of death. The time of trouble approaching will mean the loss of much life; as Jesus said, "Unless those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." – Matt. 24:22.

