

"YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH"

Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." – Isaiah 26:20,21.

THERE is an affectionate tenderness about these words of our Heavenly Father which helps us to realize His great love for His people, and His special care over them. But while appreciating very gratefully this special love and care in the comfort, encouragement and protection afforded us by our Heavenly Father in the world's great tribulation, we would come far short of having His Spirit if we should regard the matter with self-complacency, forgetful of His great love for the world also. This love, veiled behind the clouds of His righteous indignation against their sins, in wisdom strikes the heavenly blow which will shatter all their idols and humble their pride in the dust, that so the sore wounds of His wrath may prepare them for their everlasting healing.

If God so loved the world as to give His Only Begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish [eternally], but have everlasting life," He loves them still, and it is His love that wields the rod for their correction. He also would have His people so regard His judgments, and while they rejoice in the sunshine of His favor, because by faith they have come into an attitude which can receive it, He would have them share His spirit toward the world; and while the blows of His righteous indignation fall heavily upon the world, He would have us point them to the cause of their calamities and to the only remedy – "In returning [to God] and rest [in Him alone] shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." "Be still," saith the Lord, "and know that I am God; I will

be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." – Isa. 30:15; Psa. 46:10.

But who are those whom the Lord is pleased to designate by the endearing name, "My people"? Does this class include every one upon whom His name is named? No; for that would include a great number of false professors. As the Psalmist expresses it, it includes all those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice (Psa. 50:5.) – all the consecrated and faithful children of God, however young or weak they may be, whose hearts are fixed firmly and resolutely to be truly loyal and obedient children by His assisting grace.

To be numbered among the children of God is a great privilege; but it means much more than many seem to understand – much more both on their part and on God's part. On their part, it signifies, not merely a name to live in some great organization which bears the Christian name, but that they have become sons and heirs of God through Christ; that they have fully consecrated themselves to God to follow in the footsteps of His dear Son; that they have renounced the vain pomp and glory of the world and have solemnly covenanted to live apart from its spirit, ambitions, hopes and aims; and not only so, but that in pursuance of that covenant, they are striving daily to be faithful, and meekly to take up their cross and follow their Leader and Head, Christ Jesus.

On God's part it signifies the fulfilment of all His gracious promises to such through Christ, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. It signifies that in the present life we have His Fatherly Love, care, discipline, counsel, teaching, protection and encouragement, to the end; and that afterwards we shall be received into His glorious presence, and into everlasting rest, joy and peace. Oh, how blessed to be the people of God! even in the present life the reward of His favor is beyond computation.

THE "SECRET PLACE" OF HIS SAINTS

The place of hiding is "the secret place of the Most High," "under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1-9.) This secret place of the Most High, Beloved, is the place of intimate communion and fellowship with God, through the blessed privilege of prayer and through faith in His precious Word and His promised providential care.

"When all around our souls gives way,
He then is all our hope and stay."

Oh, how precious is this hiding place! What rest and refreshment we find in the midst of the commotion that is even now bestirring the whole world, but especially the nations of Christendom – rest from the pride and folly of men in their abortive efforts to readjust the present unsatisfactory social order; and rest from the strife of tongues in their equally vain attempt to evolve the clear principles of truth and righteousness from the present confusion of human traditions. (Psa. 31:20.) Here we find rest, peace, light and joy, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Few indeed are those who can understand our motives in thus withdrawing from the world and from the various **[R5255 : page 180]** organizations of the nominal Christian Church, to walk alone with God; and many are the reproaches which such must endure for His name's sake. But fear not; "shut thy doors [of faith] about thee," and heed not the reproaches; turn a deaf ear to them, and "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread," (Isa. 8:13.); and, "Above all, take [for the conflict before you] the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Eph. 6:16.) "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." – I Jno. 5:4.

It is to inspire such a faith as this that the Lord has offered us, in addition to all His precious promises, so many encouragements to

simple, childlike trust in Him, and that He has bidden us to turn a deaf ear to the reproaches of man, saying, "Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My Law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings....I, even I, am He that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of a man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that has stretched forth the Heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? ...I have put **My Words** in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the Heavens [establish the new Heavens], and lay the foundations of the earth [the new earth], and say unto Zion [the people tried and proved by these afflictions to be the worthy heirs of the new Kingdom – the new Heavens and earth], Thou art MY PEOPLE." – Isa. 51:7,12,13,16.

While the storm of trouble which is to engulf the whole world will affect all men, both individually and collectively, the Lord's people, who seek only to draw yet closer to Him, entering more fully into the secret place of communion and fellowship and rest in Him, and shutting the doors of faith about them, will there be safely hidden from the alarm and fear and trembling that will take hold upon all other classes. And while they patiently endure its effects upon their temporal interests, they will rejoice not only in the knowledge of God's overruling Providence, in the whirlwind and in the storm as well as in the calms of life, but also in His blessed assurance that His wrath will be thus revealed only "*for a little moment,*" and then will His righteous Kingdom be manifested in power and great glory, and they "shall shine forth as the sun." – Matt. 13:43.

Speaking of the trouble at the end of the Gospel Age, our Lord said, "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36.) Again (vs. 28)

He said, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." "My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors."

How much trouble there will be in our passing into the secret "chambers," in passing unto the Lord, we do not know. Yet when this trouble comes, there will be such a blessing from the Lord that those who go through it will be able to rejoice in tribulation. Whatever their experiences will be, these will be joyful in that they will have the thought of being forever with the Lord. We can rejoice even as did St. Stephen.

RETRIBUTION FOR WILFUL SIN

Verse 21 seems to refer to the operation of the principle of justice in God's judgments upon the world. The Heavenly Father stands for Justice, and He has appointed that all of His Mercy shall be exercised through the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord will be specially identified with the trouble upon the nations, but it will not be so much His work as the Father's. The Day of Trouble is called the Day of Jehovah. We read that "In that Day His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives," and that there shall be a great earthquake. – Zech. 14:4.

While God has done nothing for mankind during the past six thousand years, but has rested so far as any work of Restitution is concerned, yet in some instances He has interfered to prevent the spread of evil, as in the case of the Amalekites and of the Sodomites. The Scriptures seem to indicate that in the end of this Age He will intervene in the affairs of mankind, and execute justice in the time of trouble.

In the Scriptures, Justice is represented as calling for retribution. The blood of the murderers' victims is said to cry for vengeance. Whether the sin has been literal murder, or has been some injustice which has led to crime or suicide, Justice will require of humanity

this much of retribution on this score. Justice demands that the children of Adam shall suffer. The Church of Christ is a separate class, taken out from the world and having their sins forgiven. They are upholders of Truth and righteousness.

But this time of trouble coming upon the world will be the time when Justice will get its dues, so to speak. Justice will take its "pound of flesh." It will require for the more or less wilful sins of humanity. The class that has [R5256 : page 180] reaped the benefit of the spoliation of the poor in the past, will have to pay some of the toll to Justice in squaring the accounts. The Apostle James says, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you." We are not to think, however, that in this present time God is dealing with the rich. None are on trial now except the Church of Christ. The others are merely the world of mankind, one part of which God will permit to wreak a measure of vengeance on the other part. But man's extremity will be God's opportunity. His appointed time for the establishment of His Kingdom will have come, and He will cause this wrath of man to work out good for humanity.

Those who are causing this trouble to come on are not aware of what they are doing. But when satisfaction shall have been made to Justice, Messiah's Kingdom will interpose. We read that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." This exacting of a penalty for such sins as we have enumerated is not at all in conflict with the Bible teaching that Christ died for sin. Jesus pays the *sin-debt* of the world.

The *sin-debt* of the world was a death penalty. Unless the Lord Jesus had met that penalty, the world would never be released. That death penalty would have remained upon the world, without any injustice in any way. The selfishness which has led to *murder* is, however, much more than the meeting of Adam's *sin penalty* by our Lord. Whoever has, through injustice, been responsible for murderous conditions is held responsible for those conditions.

We read that in the end of the Jewish Age our Lord said that God would require from that generation a reckoning for all the righteous blood shed from the time of Abel down. (Matt. 23:35.) And the trouble which came upon the Jewish nation in the end of their Age fully settled that account. They had light and knowledge, and thus were held responsible. They were obliged to suffer because of the injuries that were not only perpetrated by some, but endorsed or winked at by others. **[R5256 : page 181]**

LIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY

In the close of this Age, it would seem, the judgment of the Lord will be upon Christendom, which has had much light, although at times only a refracted light. But a measure of responsibility has come with it, and apparently the Lord's edict is that they shall not escape the penalty. From this generation He will require all the righteous blood shed during this Age, upon it, even as He did from the Jews in the end of their Age. This will cause the great time of trouble here, as it did there. So far as the world is concerned, they might not perceive the relationship between this time and the past. We know only from the Scriptures. God gives us this understanding, that we may have the greater poise and comfort of mind.

In thinking of the nature of the tribulation at the end of this Age, we are first of all to remember that it is a tribulation coming upon the world and the hypocrites. The Lord tells us that if we are faithful, we shall not come into the condemnation coming upon the world. The intimation is that those who are not faithful enough to get into the Little Flock will come into this condemnation with the world. So the Lord tells us of some who will get their portion with the hypocrites. – Matt. 24:51.

Only the wheat class constitute the Church of Christ. Only they will be gathered into the barn. (Matt. 13:30.) The tare class will undergo this time of trouble coming upon the world. The hypocrite class will include the rich of this world. These are addressed by

St. James, 5:1-6. In these verses, the Apostle is turning aside from his line of thought. Then he addresses the Church again. The trouble will be especially hard on the rich, who are represented as weeping and howling for misery.

The Great Company class is typically represented by the scapegoat of Israel's Atonement Day ceremonies. The bullock typifies our Lord Jesus, and the Lord's goat His faithful followers. (Heb. 13:11-13.) After the faithful ones have finished their course, then something will be done with the scapegoat – the Great Company. The account in Leviticus is very specific that the high priest will then lay upon the head of the scapegoat all the iniquities of all Israel. (Lev. 16:21.) All the sins of all the people were laid upon the head of the scapegoat, that it might bear them away – make full satisfaction. As has been suggested, God has made provision for the cancellation of original sin through Christ, and has made arrangements for the satisfaction of Justice, so far as all the other sins of the world are concerned, through the Great Company class.

There is a correspondency between the end of the Jewish Age and the end of this Gospel Age in this way: As expiation for the taking of the life of Jesus was required of the Jewish nation, so at the end of the Gospel Age, the sacrificed life of the Church will in a measure be required of nominal Spiritual Israel.

The Lord seems to give this suggestion, when He says that "the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." (Luke 11:50,51.) And St. Paul writes that all things written in the prophecies shall be fulfilled. So in the end of this Age there are certain things charged up against Christendom for their evil deeds. This will include all the persecutions of this Gospel Age, including also, presumably, all the persecutions against the Jews.

Therefore the Scriptures indicate that a great time of trouble similar to that which came upon the Jewish nation will now come upon all Christendom. The experiences of Israel in the year 70 will be paralleled in the experiences of the year 1915.

