

GOD'S JUDGMENTS UPON **A WICKED WORLD**

Perhaps we can do no better this month than resume the consideration of the song to be sung in the land of Judah at the crisis of the day of salvation. The day of salvation is a long and cloudless one. The song belongs to the beginning of the day—when as yet its full glory has not been manifested. The Lord has come and expelled the Russian invader from the Holy Land, but the whole earth beyond Judah's frontiers is in arms, and, under "*the Beast and the false prophet*," will put forth a gigantic effort to crush the newly manifested Israelitish power. A recognition of this is necessary to discern the bearing of some parts of the song.

The righteous, in one body, look back from the song point of view, upon the night from which they have just emerged. They rejoicingly declare the fact which is now sweet to them in retrospect, viz.,

"With my soul have I desired Thee in the night."

It was sweet to them at the time, but sweet to bitterness, for the desire for God in a day when He is not to be found, is not a refreshing experience but the reverse. It is as David expresses it:

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks," which is not an enjoying state.

But now, when the day of song for the righteous has come, it will be pleasant to look back and think that while the night prevailed upon the earth, their eyes were in strong desire towards God, and that God has openly acknowledged their love by manifesting Himself to them in the sending of Christ.

"With my spirit within me, will I seek Thee early."

"Early" is suggestive of morning. The morning has come when the song is sung, but the seeking for God has not ceased. Only now it is a seeking with a finding, which differs from the seeking of these days of darkness. The sons of God will always seek God. They will never forget Him or tire in their love. They will always feel what David says:

"Thy love is better than life."

But at the date of the song, it has special point:

"When Thy judgments are in the earth, then shall the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness."

They have not learnt righteousness at the day of the song. They are about to do so by the judgments about to be manifested in the terrible war of the great day of God Almighty; and it is meet that those by whom those judgments are to be inflicted should have their eyes especially on God. How incongruous it would be that those who are about to bring the world to God should for a moment lose sight of Him. They are for the time being in the position that Christ occupies in the interval between his rejection by Israel and his coming.

"I will wait upon the Lord that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, I will look for Him."

The judgment to be inflicted upon the world is not in wantonness or superfluity. It is a necessity: it cannot be dispensed with. The righteous, rejoicing together, recognise it.

"Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord."

The history of the world is the proof of this. God's favour has been shown to the race of Adam since the day the first sinner was driven out of Eden; and the result is before our eyes in a world lying in wickedness. The wickedness differs in form, complexion, and intensity, but in its most cultured forms, it is wickedness still, the rejection of the law God has given; the refusal of His rights and honour, the assertion of man's right to what he enjoys by favour;

the appropriation of earth's goodness to human service and glory. Favour does not teach mankind righteousness—judgment will, and in the song under consideration, the righteous contemplate the prospect with satisfaction. It is a divine purpose much spoken of throughout the Scriptures.

“For a long time I have holden my peace; I have been still and refrained myself. Now will I cry like a travailing woman. I will destroy and devour at once” (Isa. 42:14).

“The needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever . . . The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup” (Psa. 9:18; 11:5-6).

“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Psa. 58:10-11).

“They shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in that day that I shall do this” (Mal. 4:3).

“For my determination is to gather the nations . . . to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy” (Zeph. 3:8).

At first, the uplifted hand of God is not recognised (going back to the song):

“Lord, when Thy hand is lifted up, they will not see.”

It is probable that for a good while, men all over the earth will refuse to recognise anything divine in the events that will have expelled the Russian army from the Holy Land, and checked the British advance in the South West and in the Mediterranean. In the pride and wilfulness of their “manly” hearts, they will attribute them to a natural origin. Have they forgotten the destruction of Lisbon by earthquake, and repulsion and appalling re-rush of the Tagus? Has not all the world heard of the volcanic submergence of Pompeii and Herculaneum? With these occurrences of nature, they will try to class the earthquake that divides the Mount of olives and the bituminous rain that decimates the Gogian hosts, and for a while they will calm themselves with this view, in which they will doubtless be fortified by the arguments and opinions of scientific experts at the various continental capitals. But the delusion will vanish at last. The song proceeds:

“But they SHALL see and be ashamed of their envy toward Thy people. The fire of (prepared for) their enemies shall devour them.”

If nothing succeeded the Gogian catastrophe—if affairs in the Holy Land quieted down and events resumed their wonted channel, as in the case of all natural calamities, their theory might last and quell their fears. But great and equally appalling events ensue. The nations re-organise and rally. Masses of troops are thrown forward to retrieve the day. Conflict ensues with the Holy Land Power that only heaps disasters upon disaster. Rome is sent crashing into the abyss. The forces of the European muster are repulsed. Supernatural visitations of fire—a la Sodom and Gomorrah—spread terrors in the countries of the enemy—especially “among them that dwell carelessly in the isles” (Ezek. 39:6). Repeated efforts to continue the war only entail repeated disaster and overthrow. Vast multitudes are slain in all the earth (Isa. 66:16; Jer. 25:35). Now the conviction steals over the population that the hand of God is in the situation, and that the demands addressed to the courts are not those of fanaticism, but of Omnipotence incarnate in Jesus and his brethren. At last they “see” and are ashamed, and surrender, and wait for the law that will come to them from Zion,

in compliance with which, they will everywhere bend themselves willingly to the work of Jewish restoration.

“Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us, for Thou also hast wrought all our works for us.”

This is the natural sequel. *“Peace upon Israel”* is the motto of God’s dealing with men upon earth, and will now receive political illustration in all the earth. The saints who sing this song are the inner kernel of the commonwealth of Israel. From them, peace will extend to every part thereof, and finally to the Gentiles at large. The dreadful Gentile downtreading ages of the past will then be a subject of contemplative retrospect.

“O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name. They are dead: they shall not live. They are deceased, they shall not rise. Therefore hast thou visited them and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish.”

When this can be proclaimed as a matter of accomplished fact, there will be such peace and joy as neither Israel nor mankind have ever known. The scattered, reduced, and stinted nation of Abraham’s race will revive.

“Israel will bud and blossom and fill the world with fruit.”

This is the subject of the next sentence of the song:

“Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord: thou hast increased the nation. Thou art glorified. Thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.”

Yes, Thou hadst removed it, but it had been written, and at this crisis is now fulfilled:

“He that scattereth Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock.”

So that, as it is again written,

“Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children the work of Mine hands in the midst of him, they shall sanctify My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine” (Isa. 29:22-24).

Then the song goes back once more to the day of trouble, that precedes the day of glory—the day of suffering and abortive effort.

“Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee: they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them.”

The *“they”* of this sentence while expressive of the national Israel, is inclusive of the *“we”* who sing the song, for both are inseparably associated in the purpose of God. The day of national deliverance is preceded by a day of great trouble. This is Jeremiah’s forecast of it:

“We have heard a voice of trembling—of fear and not of peace. Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces turned into paleness? Alas, for the day is great, it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him, but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I will raise up unto them” (Jer. 30:5-9).

The time of Jacob’s trouble has been long and severe, but gathers to a head as the hour of deliverance approaches. We see something like this going on now. The Jews have come into great trouble in those countries where the bulk of their race is located—Russia, Germany, Austria, and Rumania. The persecution against them is enough to bring tears from a heart of stone. It is relentless and cruel to a degree almost equalling the worst periods of their history. It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it, but not by man. No one

can save him out of it but God, who brought them out of Egypt, and has scattered them among the nations because of their disobedience. There is none among all Jerusalem's sons to take her by the hand and guide her out of the morass in which she has been sunk for centuries. The Rothschilds and the Montefiores and the Sassoons—what can they do? They are great financiers; but they dare not move to Israel's rescue if they had the heart. Their positions depend upon their service to the Gentiles: and their hearts are not with Israel's woes or God's dishonour, but with their own family greatness. This would be sacrificed by any practical effort on behalf of Yahweh's down-trodden land and people. Israel is truly helpless, but God Himself will be her helper, as he says:

"O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help. I will be thy King. Where is there any other that may save thee?" (Hos. 13:9).

The faithful in Israel, national or spiritual, are powerless to change the situation by any effort or combination in the absence of God's interposition. The song recognises this in its next measure.

"Like as a woman with child that draweth near the time of her delivery is in pain and crieth out in her pangs, so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child: we have been in pain: we have, as it were, brought forth wind. We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the earth fallen."

But all this is changed now. God has arisen to judgment; and the reigning governments of the Gentiles in every land and tongue will have to come down and stoop low at Israel's feet. Here the song ends, and God, by the prophets responds. His words indicate the means by which the great salvation is to be wrought:

"Thy dead shall live," (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, and all of their type and family in all their generations).

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Dan. 12:1-2).

"My dead body, they shall arise."

The righteous dead, in their totality are the body of Christ and of God in the earth. As such, they cannot be held by the grave. As Christ's personal body arose, so will his mystical body arise.

"He that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also, and present us together."

It is a question of the appointed time. At the date of the song, the time has arrived:

"Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust."

Receiving this summons, *"the earth shall cast out the dead."* They find themselves in new circumstances and a new time. After the judgment preliminaries of the era, they are summoned into retirement for protection from the fearful visitation about to burst forth in all the earth, in *"the time of trouble such as never was."*

"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."

Then ensues the struggle with wickedness as organised in the states and kingdoms of Europe in latter-day fourth-beast manifestation.

"The Lord, with his sore, great, and strong sword, shall punish leviathan, that crooked serpent: and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea."

This slaying of the political dragon that swims in the sea of peoples will involve the suppression of the governments, the punishment of the population, and the transfer of all power to Yahweh's anointed and his multitudinous consort—*"the Bride, the Lamb's wife,"*

consisting of the justified and glorified brethren of the Lord, manifested by resurrection, as a new, practical, living reality in earth's affairs, with blessed consequence to all lands and peoples. All will at last say with them:

"We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Such is the assured and glorious prospect exhibited in the song that will be sung in the land of Judah *"in that day."* We may rest on it as on a certainty, and not as a dream or beautiful poem. It is the purpose of God, which no power in the universe can disannul. Men come and go in a ceaseless stream of generations, their thoughts and their schemes, bulking large in each other's eyes for a time, come and go with them, and pass into a forgotten oblivion, age after age. But the Word of the Lord, whether unknown, or known to be despised, endureth forever. It is fixed and established as the heavens, and will bring forth its own accomplishment at the appointed time.

"God hath appointed a day."

This is the apostolic proclamation. He has given a pledge of the fact in the resurrection of Christ; this is the apostolic assurance. Therefore, we are in the position of true wisdom when we wait and watch for the fulfilment of His Word. We have waited long. We shall not have to wait always. The hour will come when we shall unite in the rapturous words,

"Lo this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is Yahweh: we have waited for Him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

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