

"They Shall Obtain Gladness and Joy"

In all the Divine arrangements, the principle stated by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:46, is always observed—"*first that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.*" We see this order of development in regard to the "holy city," the bride, the kingdom, Jerusalem, heaven and earth. The natural is the basis of the spiritual.

Our Bible opens with a record of the creation of the natural heavens and the earth, when darkness was upon the face of the deep. In order to dispel the darkness, God made the sun and the moon, and set them in the heavens to give light upon the earth. As the Revelation unfolds, we come to the time in the purpose of God, when the natural is no longer required—

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. . . And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there"—Rev. 21:23 & 25.

What a magnificently beautiful picture! But how faint it appears to our weak mortal eyes. If, however, it be our lot to enter the Kingdom of God, we will then look at this rapturous sight through eyes of Spirit nature, and behold it in its true perspective.

But let us not get ahead of our subject. There is much to be done before the time when "God will be all in all." Why is it that these things seem so far away? Why does the process leading up to these things cover such a long period of time? Why must we suffer so much anguish, which at times seems more than we can bear? Let us not be discouraged for we have the assurance that—

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

The introduction of sin has brought all this suffering upon the human race; but we must not question the method God is using to remove it from the earth. It is a gradual process which will eventually lead up to the consummation of God's purpose.

Because of sin, our first parents were driven from the garden of Eden, and the healing of the breach began by worshipping God through the medium of sacrifice. This continued for many years in an apparently obscure manner until God brought a whole nation near to Him by the hand of Moses. This, however, was but a shadow of good things to come, and continued so until the appearance of Jesus, the antitype of all that the Law prefigured. At this time a marked change became visible in the order of development as Jesus was offered to the world through the Gospel, by which a people is being taken out of the world for his Name.

They are the people who are responding to the invitation to "*come out from the world*" and be "*sons and daughters of our Father in heaven.*" When the appointed time comes and Jesus appears in the earth the second time, the greatest change in the Divine Plan will take place, and the Kingdom will be restored to Israel. This is also the time when (Isa. 51:11-13)—

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

At this time, too, the song of the angels will find its fulfilment in "joy to the world" as Jesus reigns for a thousand years. This thousand years of glorious administration will fill the earth with the Glory of God as the waters now cover the sea, and it will provide a population of obedient and God-

fearing people who will occupy the earth. Without exception, they will be immortal, and socially and racially fused into ONE, as the result of assimilation to a common perfection of nature and harmony with God.

This is the time when the final change in the Divine Plan will have taken place, and sin and death will disappear—

"And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for former things are passed away."

In this glorious state, Jesus and his brethren will—

". . . shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever"—Dan. 12:3.

Our object in bringing these things to your attention by stirring up your minds, is to endeavor to place before you a *brighter and more living picture of what is in store for the world and its people*, and that we may better realize how little this fleeting existence really means, except as a golden opportunity to prepare ourselves for a better one.

As we have passed over these great developments rather quickly, let us go back to the reappearance of Jesus in the earth, and look at them with greater care. Following his manifestation, there will be a period of judgment and destruction, in which all the unrighteous will be destroyed. Those remaining will be obedient and eager to serve him. Then will begin the renovation of the earth preparatory to "*planting the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth*."

Wreckage and confusion will cover the earth as a result of God's judgments upon the nations. The ensuing years will be busy ones as the people are put to work in clearing up the carnage. Much of what we see now will be torn down to make room for homes and other structures to be built to Divine specifications. While we have no definite Scripture giving such details, we must remember that there will be no half measures, nor any compromise with worn-out systems when Christ reigns in Salem's Towers.

The curse on the ground will be lifted, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Weeds will no longer mar the crops; but the earth will bring forth an hundredfold, and none will go hungry. Forgotten will be the smoky cities, and crowded tenements, and in their place will be quiet homes among shady trees. The climate will be ideal throughout the earth with cloudless skies by day, and gentle rain and dew will refresh the earth at night. Everywhere, the blessings of the new order will be manifest. The desert will become like the garden of the Lord, the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and there shall be an abundance of grain in the land.

The destructive forces of nature will be remembered only as the terrors of an age that is past. The animal kingdom will undergo a complete change. The wolf and the lamb shall romp together, and the leopard shall play with the kid. The lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the cow and the bear shall feed together. Troublesome insects will disappear, and all such that overshadow the earth as a curse, will be forgotten.

But what about the inhabitants of this tranquil paradise? In this present life, we accept many unpleasant things as necessary parts of the imperfections that surround us, and give them little thought. But when we stop and think about them, we become appalled at the mass of evil and corruption that mars, in some way, every life upon the earth.

It is perplexingly difficult to visualize the pleasures of a life from which all this has been removed, and no doubt it will seem incredible to the people of the millennium that it was possible to enjoy any measure of happiness under present circumstances. Think of the effort and time that is wasted in elections, lawsuits, trials, investigations, searches for criminals, and taking care of them. Consider, too, the many things that will be discontinued. No more soldiers, firemen, police, wardens, diplomats, doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges, politicians, or hosts of civil servants.

Turning to another aspect of modern life, there will no longer be any drunken parties, no more dance halls, no lurid movies, no pool rooms or cocktail lounges to satisfy the stunted intelligence and the ignorance and depravity that goes with them. No, these will all be gone, and the picture we looked at in the beginning of our remarks will come to life, and we shall see Jesus—

"And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

All people will find pleasure in righteousness, and the law of the Lord. They will be happy to worship God and meditate upon all the wonders of His handiwork. *The lover of God will no longer be called upon to come out and be separate.* He will mix freely in a world-wide fellowship of those whose joy will be to serve and obey the Lord.

The many diseases that bear so heavily upon the people of today will be taken away, and the inhabitant shall no longer say "I am sick." The blind shall see, the lame shall walk, and the deaf shall hear. With freedom from disease, will come length of life. There shall not be an old man who has not fulfilled his years. Long and healthy lives will be the order of the day.

The whole earth will be open without limit to those who wish to travel. The central feature will be the annual journey to Zion:

"Every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."

This will be compulsory, but everything will combine to make it a joy and pleasure. There will be no customs or immigration officers to contend with, for all boundaries and frontiers will have been swept away, and war and destruction shall be forgotten.

These are some of the things revealed in the Scriptures of Truth, and this blissful state of affairs is that to which we are called.

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted"—Ps. 89:15-16.

If we try to develop a mental impression from the words "*in the light of thy countenance*," we are helped by the vision of the Son of Man as seen by John when he said "his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength." This must have stirred up in John vivid memories of the transfiguration of Jesus. On that occasion "his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light." It was a representation of the power and majesty of the Lord Jesus Anointed. Thus he was exhibited as the Son of Man personal and corporate in the glory of the Father as he will be in the Age to Come.

We have tried to place before you some of the beauties and glories accomplished by the "Dayspring from on High," but we realize that our subject is beyond our powers to comprehend—

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"—1 Cor. 2:9.

The contemplation of these things, although feebly presented, should stir us to the very depths of our being. How indescribably glorious it will be to see the things in reality, that John saw in vision! The Bible sets before us a resplendent future—a future of glory and everlasting joy—a future in which the wisdom of God combines the glory of His name with the highest possible happiness for them who will be redeemed to God out of every kindred and tongue and people, and nation.

"The redeemed of the Lord." *Who are they? And why are they redeemed?* The answer is found in that heart-searching phrase— "*He that overcometh.*" In fact, in the opening part of the Apocalypse, Jesus makes it plain that the blessings he will bring with him are only to those who "overcome."

Now, overcoming implies a fight. To succeed, we must know the nature of the fight, and who the enemy is. He is not hard to find. Briefly, in scriptural terms, he is the old man of the flesh. But there is no fighting until the entry of Divine ideas into the human brain. The mind of the flesh does not like being disturbed. He likes to please himself. As soon as the mind of the Spirit says "*Thou shalt not,*" the mind of the flesh begins looking for excuses, and means to justify his actions. All the mind of the flesh (or the old man) thinks about is the present

But the mind of the Spirit (or the new man) realizes that the present is only for a moment, while *the future is eternal*. The fighting, then, or the war, is a combat between these two. As the Divine ideas increase, so the opposition increases. How, then, will it end? Well, it depends how much effort we put into the fight. If we are careless, and take it easy, and go after the pleasures of this life, and strive to please ourselves, there can only be one result, and that is "*failure,*" and in the end *DEATH*.

But if we realize and believe what God has offered us through the Gospel, and set our hearts upon it, and determine to do all in our power to walk in newness of life—to develop a "patient continuance" in well-doing—be not conformed to the world, but let Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, the battle will become easier as time goes by. The new man of the Spirit will get the upper hand, and we will overcome with joy. The vision of the Kingdom of God will grow brighter, day by day, while the love of the world will grow weaker.

Who would not be content to leave the present evil world with all its corruptions, its cruel poverties, its degrading ignorance and shallow knowledge, for the Kingdom of God with its unutterable beauties of character, its power and purity, to be associated with those who have received the garment of praise, and go forth in the vigor of an immortal nature to bask in the "*Light of His Countenance!*" Surely it does not dim our enthusiasm, but only serves to further convince us that the reward of faithful service is far greater than the brief service that we are asked to give God now.

May God give us wisdom and understanding that we may know how to stand in the midst of the evil that surrounds us, and to hold fast unmoved the hope of the gospel, looking unto Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, that when he comes, we may be among those who sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb—

"Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?" —Rev. 15:3 & 4.

Let us then anoint our eyes with the word of Truth, that we may see past the present, into that glorious future when—

"The redeemed of the Lord shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" —G.A.G.
