

The Glories Of the Age to Come

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One government throughout the world, ruling solely by the law of God: its fruits, peace and fulness of life for mankind from pole to pole.

That seems the most futile of Utopian dreams in a world of international conflict: yet it is as sure as the unceasing roll of the heavenly bodies; for "the mouth of the Lord" - by whose word the heavens were made - "has spoken it".

Many prophets (Ezekiel in particular) speak of the splendid Temple to be reared in the Holy Land: and the prophecies of Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-4 draw in poetic symbol a picture of the new world order of which it will be the center. With Christ's return to the earth, the throne of David will be restored in Zion as the seat of his rule; and men from far countries, sickened by slaughter and groping amid the ruin of human decency which man's evil has brought, will turn to it as to light. They will say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths".

Not only by the sheer power of moral beauty will the new rule draw men into its sway. The history of the Twentieth Century has proved too well that there is a core of wickedness in human nature which loves the dark rather than light. In this age which was deemed the flower of human progress, the greater part of the world came for a time under the dominion of men who made evil their good, and who with deliberate malice strove to destroy all that two thousand years have found lovely and of good report.

The King in Zion will rule with a rod of iron and break in pieces like a potter's vessel those who oppose him (Psa. 2:9). With the sanction of absolute right, he will have also a power against which raging nations will dash themselves in vain. He will "rebuke strong nations afar off" (Micah 4:3), and under his compulsion they will "beat their swords into ploughshares".

Man have asked two things of organized society: that it should give them security and sufficiency. They want to live safe and ordered lives, with a fair chance of obtaining suitable food, clothing and housing for themselves and their families. Human government has failed them pitifully in both these elementary needs. Divine government will meet those needs with all the resources of the earth turned to the pursuits of peace: "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4). With freedom from fear, there will be a freedom also from want.

Guided by the light of God from the center of His law in Zion, men and women will no longer be stunted and warped by their environment: they will be free to grow to that full mental and spiritual stature for which they were made in God's image.

Half the world lives now under the poisoned shadow of vicious beliefs; the minds of the rest are clouded by uncertainty. The spiritual feast and the enlightenment of that day, described in the poetic language of Isaiah (25:6, 7), are beautiful as daybreak by contrast with this gloom:

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

No mere change of social system could give the benefits which will come from that age. Neither king nor demagogue has ever had power to raise the dead: none but Jesus of Nazareth, whose kingdom, once established, will have no end. Under his rule life will come with a new wealth and healing, for it is written:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert (Isa. 35:5-6).

Harmony with the Source of all being will make life richer physically as well as mentally: its span will be lengthened, so that men will no longer lose their powers before they are fully attained, and pass into the grave at an ineffectual three or four score years:

And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them (Isa. 65:19-23).

Though the words are written especially of the people of Israel, who will be restored to their land as the central domain of this world empire, all families of the earth will be blessed through this blessing which will come on Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3).

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32:1) hints at the ordered administration of this great realm. The "princes" will be those whom Daniel was told would awake from sleep in the dust to everlasting life (Dan. 12:2), who in the Book of Revelation are shown acclaiming the "Lamb of God" who had washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10). They rule over the mortal population of the world during the thousand years which is the last stage in God's work of redeeming the world; then death will be abolished, and the world will enter on the glory of that final state in which God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:23-28).