

The Beauty of Holiness

"In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth"
—Psalm 110:3

THERE IS a great depth of beauty and instruction in the 7 short verses of Psalm 110—

"The Lord (Yahweh) said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

"Yahweh — Yahweh Elohim—**He Who Shall Be Mighty Ones**—the Memorial Covenant-Name, the glorious eternal purpose of the manifestation of God in a singing, rejoicing host of immortals.

"Yahweh said to my Lord."

It is David speaking, and from this verse Jesus establishes his own divine Sonship—

"What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he? If David called him, 'Lord,' how is he his son?"—and they durst not ask him any more questions."

Beside Jesus himself, both Peter and Paul apply this verse to Christ.

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"Sit thou at My right hand."

The right hand is the position of favor, blessing, (approval, strength, authority, honor, assurance, intimacy and fellowship. All these aspects are involved in the conception of Jesus ascending to God's right hand—

"The saving strength of His right hand" (Psa. 20:6).

"Thy right hand is full of righteousness" (Psa. 48:10).

"The Lord hath sworn by His right hand" (Isa. 62:8).

"At Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psa. 16:11).

Jesus is described as "The man of God's right hand" (Psa. 80:17)—the man in whom is centered and embodied all these aspects of blessing and fellowship.

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THE invitation to "sit" implies a completed work. Writing to the Hebrews (10:11-13), Paul refers to this Psalm in making a contrast between the Mosaic priests who **stood** repeating the same sacrifices day after day, year after year, and Christ, who—

". . . after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, **sat down** on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."

To sit is a position of honor and fulfilment and rest. To **stand** portrays servitude and incompleteness and unfinished toil.

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"Until I make thine enemies thy footstool"

This seems out of place. It seems to be lowering the exalted tone of the Psalm to start out about vengeance on enemies. We would be inclined to think that the judgment on the enemies, though necessary, would be a very minor aspect of the Kingdom compared to its glories and blessings, and goodness and love.

Are we a little embarrassed by this apparent obsession with vengeance, as in various "cursing" Psalms, as something we feel a need to explain away in this modern age?

Let us not explain them away: **let us learn by them**. They are to emphasize what stands in the way of the manifestations of blessings and life—the terrible destructive seriousness of the problem of sin and evil and godlessness and natural fleshly-mindedness.

"He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

That is his work and purpose—

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (v. 26).

Sin is the great enemy from the beginning—the enemy of both God and man—that Old Serpent, the Devil and Satan. The first enemy is Sin—the last enemy is Death. Between them are comprehended all evil and sorrow and travail.

So with the so-called "cursing" Psalms.

The more we realize the evilness and seriousness and harmfulness of sin—godlessness—the natural thoughts and motions of the flesh—disobedience and self-will, the more we shall understand, and REJOICE in these references to the enemies' destruction.

We shall more wholeheartedly and fervently cry with Paul.

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

God, in the patience and wisdom of His glorious purpose, has so long tolerated the ignorant, arrogant wilfulness of man that even God's Own people are liable to lose some of the vividness of their recognition of the continually outraged majesty and authority of God in the earth — the dreadful curse of Sin in the flesh—the evil it creates—the good and joy it frustrates.

It is good to constantly be reminded of this vital truth. For all its surface pleasantness, the whole world lieth in godless wickedness.

"The Lord (Yahweh) shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion."

The rod is the iron rod of divine judgment of the earth—

"To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron. As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers" (Rev. 2: 26-27).

The rod is sent forth (v.2) "out of Zion" as Isaiah and Micah join to proclaim—

"The Law shall go forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

And in Psa. 2, God declares—

"I have set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I shall give thee the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

And these are the days of the fulfilment of these terrible and glorious things—the culmination of all the earth's long ages of travail and sorrow.

We see today Russia—the latter-day Assyrian—rapidly rising to humanly irresistible domination of the earth—everywhere on the offensive—everywhere holding the initiative—everywhere successful and confident — everywhere advancing, except as God puts "hooks in his jaws" to turn him back into the direction of advance required by the divine purpose.

Our natural tendency is to share in the disturbance and concern of the world in these ominous events leading to the time of trouble such as never was. The world has suddenly grown very small. There is no place to get away for safety

The hundreds of millions in Asia and Africa — long comfortably dominated by the western nations—are rising in ever-increasing waves of bitterness and violence, and are turning to Russia who according to God's purpose, has achieved out of the depths of poverty and backwardness, a modern miracle of scientific and industrial progress—far surpassing every nation of Europe and now pressing closer and closer upon the heels of America in the race for productive power and ascendancy, and in the one field above all today that means world-prestige—the field of space — easily outracing and humiliating the West.

But the command at this time is to "Rejoice! Lift up your heads! Your redemption draweth nigh."

There is nothing to fear. This is but the brief and divinely ordained travail that will bring forth the glorious reign of peace. God's almighty hand is upon Russia as much as it was on Egypt, Babylon and Rome. Nothing is left to chance. All is foreseen and controlled.

At just the right moment, the rod of strength shall go irresistibly forth from Zion from between the two terrible mountains of brass and Christ will reign triumphant in the midst of his enemies, and the modern nuclear nightmare of hatred and terror into which proud, evil man has plunged God's beautiful earth will be forever only a memory.

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"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"

What volumes this expresses! What thoughts it provokes! Christ's "people" are natural Israel. The redeemed are more than his "people"—they are his children, they are himself, they are the "dew of his youth" of the end of the verse.

The great tragedy of Israel is that they were not willing in the day of his suffering, humiliation and weakness—

"O Jerusalem, if Thou hadst but known, in this thy day!"

"He came to his own, and his own received him not."

"We did esteem him stricken—smitten of God and afflicted."

"We will not have this man to reign over us!"

"Crucify him! We have no king but Caesar."

Terrible words! Terrible consequences! To what extent do we by our fleshly actions say the same—"We will not have this man to reign over us!"—for actions speak louder than words. They tell where our heart and affections truly are.

But God often in His love and wisdom brings future good out of present evil. The Jews' rejection of Christ, though terrible for them, was the blessing and salvation of the Gentiles, and at last, through and by means of the very tribulation they have brought upon themselves, all Israel shall be saved—

"They shall look upon him they pierced, and mourn."

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

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NOW COMES the heart of the Psalm—the most beautiful part of all. Of this verse, bro. Thomas said, in Eureka I—

"The appearance of dew from the womb of the dawn, as representative of the resurrection of the saints is the most beautiful of scriptural similitudes."

"In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."

The broad picture is clear—the multitudinous Christ manifested in light as the dew from the dark womb of the morning by the glorious rising of the Sun of Righteousness—but there are many possible shades of meaning to the various symbols.

The term "beauties of holiness" is also rendered "the splendours of the holy ones, or saints." The word here for "beauty" is elsewhere translated "glory, honor, majesty, excellence."

We can thus add to the breadth and variety of the meaning of the phrase, but really, for deep significance, the expression "beauty of holiness" cannot be improved upon. It is the essence of the purpose of God.

Beauty IS holiness, and holiness is beauty, and there is no true beauty other than holiness. All that is not holy is ugly and repulsive and diseased. Beauty is a prominent subject in the Scriptures—true, divine beauty—

Psa. 27:4—"One thing have I desired . . . to behold the beauty of the Lord."

Psa. 90:17—"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

Psa. 149:4—"He will beautify the meek with salvation."

Eccl. 3:11—"He hath made everything beautiful in its time."

Beauty in creation, first natural, then spiritual, is the one greatest single proof and evidence of divinity. IT HAS NO OTHER EXPLANATION—

"He hath made everything beautiful in its time." All the infinite beauties of creation lead to the supreme and final and eternal beauty—the beauty of holiness.

The great power of the way of Christ is its beauty—its utter contrast with the selfish, wilful ugliness of the flesh.

"From the womb of the morning."

The spiritual significance of "morning" is summed up in the statement—

"Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:15).

The night is the present dark time of weakness and mortality and struggle against the evil motions of sin, within and without—

"The darkness He called NIGHT."

This is the first mention of night, in the 5th verse of the first chapter of the Bible, and the last mention is in v. 5 of the last chapter—Rev. 22—

"And there shall be no night there, for the Lord God giveth them light."

Light is the great need, the great gift, the great blessing, the great purpose. Our minds turn to that beautiful verse in 2 Cor. 4—

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

And so, truly, even now, in this night of weakness, there are "songs in the night," but they are songs of faith, and hope, and joyful anticipation, like the songs of Paul and Silas in the dark Philippian dungeon.

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"Thou hast the dew of thy youth."

Dew is a very interesting and important phenomenon — both naturally and scripturally. It is far more important in Bible lands than in the zones we are familiar with.

In hot climates where some seasons have no rainfall at all, dew is vital for the maintenance of vegetation. We see this in Elijah's declaration to Ahab—

"There shall not be dew nor rain" (1 Kings 17:1)

And Haggai 1:10—

"The heaven over you is stayed from dew; the earth is stayed from her fruit."

On the other hand, we read—

"The king's favor is as dew upon the grass." (Prov. 19:12)

And Zech. 8:12—

"The ground shall give her increase, and the heaven shall give her dew."

The first mention of dew is in Isaac's blessing of Jacob—

"God give thee of the dew of heaven" (Gen. 27:28).

It has been a matter of objection to the fittingness of the dew to represent the resurrected saints, shining in the reflected glory of the new risen Sun of Righteousness, that dew descends from the air as condensation of atmospheric moisture. Therefore it is very interesting to note that though a portion of the dew is thus formed, **the greater part normally is from the ground.**

How beautifully this corresponds with the two classes of the resurrection—the dead in Christ and those that are "alive and remain" at his coming!

A recent edition of Everyman's Encyclopaedia says (and the wording is very striking to those who know the true symbolism of the dew)—

"In 1885 Aitken by experiments discovered that while undoubtedly some of the moisture called dew was the result of condensation of the atmosphere, the greater part is formed from moisture just risen from the earth or to the surface of plant leaves."

The Encyclopaedia Britannica confirms this and points out that the surplus moisture in the air is soon exhausted in one deposit, but the moisture from the earth keeps rising from deeper and deeper layers of the ground.

We see here a beautiful and poetic representation of the successive generations of the sleepers in Jesus coming forth to stand on their feet an exceeding great army.

The Spirit declares in Isa. 26:19 (using the Amer. Rev. Ver. for clarity, and for its remarkable closeness to bro. Thomas' translation)—

"Thy dead shall live. Thy dead bodies shall arise.

"Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of light.

"And the earth shall cast forth the dead."

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"Thou (the glorious, newly-manifested Messiah) hast the dew of thy youth."

"Youth" is a fitting term, for the joyful, and eternal vitality of the redeemed is spoken of as "renewing their youth"—Psa. 103:5—

"Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

And the meaning of this we get from Isa. 40:31—

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

"They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

But Bro. Thomas renders this word as "birth" instead of "youth." It is from the root meaning "to give birth to." Several versions render this passage, "I have begotten thee."

The saints are truly to Christ the "dew of his birth." They are the holy seed born of the bitter travail of his soul (Isa. 53:10-11)—

"He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days . . .

"He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied"

And in Psa. 22, which is all about the details of the crucifixion, we read (v. 30)—

"A seed shall serve him . . . it shall be accounted to the Lord for his generation."

This is the "nation born in a day" of Isa. 66—the "dew of thy birth" from the womb of the morning

To Christ, Paul applies the words of Isa. 8:18—

"I and the children which God hath given me."

Of the King of Righteousness, David says in Psa. 45:16:

"Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."

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Psa 110 continues (v. 4)—

"The Lord (Yahweh) hath sworn, and will not repent—

"Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

This verse is the keystone of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews Around it he builds the great framework of his demonstration that the Law of Moses must pass away before the advent of an infinitely greater and more glorious High Priest than any of Aaron's sons (Heb. 7 11-16)—

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek?

"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the Law also.

"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah . . .

"And it is yet far more evident that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who is made— not after the law of carnal commandment—but after the power of an endless life."

Continuing in Ps. 110 (vs. 5-6):

"The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath."

"He shall judge among the nations; he shall fill with dead bodies."

Here is how the Melchizedek priesthood is established. It is a ROYAL priesthood, a priesthood of power and rulership. As Psa. 72, declares—

"All kings shall fall down before him. All nations shall serve him."

His priestly kingdom is worldwide—it fills the earth.

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"He shall wound the heads over many countries."

Rather as in Bro. Thomas and most recent versions:

"He shall strike through the Head of a wide dominion."

Here is the destruction of the Serpent-power of Sin, first in its latter day organized form as Gog of the land of Magog, the Head of the assembled Image, the Kingdom of Men, standing up against the Prince of princes, and secondly, the smiting of the Serpent-head of Sin in all its manifestations throughout the earth.

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This leads us naturally to the final and climaxing thought of the Psalm—his humiliation and his glory, his exaltation through faith, obedience, suffering—

"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head."

It is his drinking of the brook in the way that we meet each week to remember.

"The brook" gives rise to many thoughts, both sad and glorious.

"Brook" is the same word as "valley." It means descent, a going down. He went down in obedience into the valley, even the valley of the shadow of death, to drink of the cup which the Father's wisdom had ordained.

"Drinking" of sorrow and travail is a familiar scriptural theme—

Psa. 102:9—"I have mingled my drink with weeping."

Psa. 80.5—"Tears to drink in great measure."

The "willows of the brook" are the symbol of humiliation and weeping.

The brook speaks too, of a weakness and smallness, as compared with the great and mighty rivers of the Gentile nations.

But there is another aspect to the brook symbol. The same word is used of the stream that flows out from Ezekiel's temple to carry life and blessing to the ends of the earth. This is the water of life, the Spirit-stream, the Word of God.

It was how they drank of the brook that determined the selection of Gideon's faithful 300.

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters:"

"Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people" (Isa. 55:1-4).

Jesus said to the woman of Samaria (John 4:14)—

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head."

He drank, in obedience, of the brook of suffering and the brook of wisdom and divine instruction. He went down into the valley of suffering, and lay down his life for his friends.

And now the Father hath lifted up his head, exalted him to His right hand, and given him a Name above every name, because he was faithful and obedient in all things, and set God ever before his face.

Let us contemplate his love, his wisdom, his obedience, his suffering and his victory, as we partake together of his solemn and joyous Memorial Feast. —G.V.G.
