

The Sure Words of Prophecy

***“We have the
prophetic word
made more sure, to
which you do well
to pay attention as
to a lamp shining
in a dark place,
until the day
dawns and the
morning star
arises in your
hearts.”***

***—II Peter 1:19, New
American Standard
Bible***

THIS MAGAZINE HAS BEEN

published continuously under the title, *The Dawn*, since its first issue appeared over eighty-two years ago. From time to time, a question may arise in the mind of the reader as to the meaning of this title, and its relation to the Scriptures and God's plan for man's salvation. A subtitle also appears on the cover of each issue—namely, “A Herald of Christ's Presence.” This designation is, we

believe, important to our understanding of God's times and seasons, and is closely related to the title, *The Dawn*.

In the following pages, we will discuss these subjects as they are presented in the Word of God, as well as other prophetic testimony contained in the Scriptures which help our understanding of the Creator's great plan of the ages and where we are

in the outworking of that plan. We trust that the consideration of these things will encourage and strengthen our mutual faith in the promises of God's Word that a new and glorious day soon awaits all the families of the earth. Indeed, even while at present the world reels in perplexity and fear, we see the "dawn" of a new day—a day which lies just beyond the horizon of present clouds and trouble.

JOY IN THE MORNING

The long reign of sin, suffering, and death is likened in the Bible to a nighttime—a time of darkness. However, the Bible assures us that this long period of night will not last forever, that there will come, in God's due time, a glad new day of joy and happiness for mankind. The psalmist uses these descriptive words: "His [God's] anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—Ps. 30:5

Not only has the sighing and crying of the world been a part of the nocturnal experiences of the human race, but through all this sorrow there has been little true knowledge of the Creator and of his loving design for the ultimate release of mankind from sin and death. This lack of understanding has also contributed to the "darkness" of present human experience. The various concepts of God which are held by most, both in the Christian and non-Christian world, have tended to instill fear into the hearts of the people, and this has increased the unhappiness of their existence.

God's "anger" spoken of by the psalmist is manifested in the sentence of death which came upon

man because of his transgression of divine law. This anger is contrasted with God's favor which, in his own due time, will bring joy and life to the people. The Scriptures reveal that this "favor" was manifested by the Creator's gift of his beloved Son to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world from sin and death, and that mankind's restoration to life, provided by the ransom, will be ushered in by the long-promised kingdom of Messiah.

One of the beautiful symbols denoting the blessings of the kingdom is found in Malachi 4:2. Here, Jesus, in the life-giving authority and power of his kingdom, is described prophetically as "the Sun of righteousness" which arises with "healing in his wings." It will be this glorious "Sun of Righteousness" which will dispel the noxious vapors of darkness and suffering that have plagued the human race so long. This will take place in that new day of blessings mentioned by David in the assurance that "joy cometh in the morning."

PETER'S TESTIMONY

Our opening text, II Peter 1:19, is found in a very interesting setting. In verse 11 of this chapter, Peter speaks of the faithful followers of the Master as receiving an abundant entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is the Messianic kingdom of promise, and Peter is reminding us that those consecrated believers who are faithful even "unto death" will, in the "first resurrection," enter into that kingdom to live and reign with Christ.—Rev. 2:10; 20:6

Then, in verses 16 to 18, Peter says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we

made known unto you the power and coming [Greek, presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”

The reference here is to the transfiguration vision which is recorded in Matthew 17:1-9. Just previous to this miraculous vision Jesus had said to his disciples, “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” (Matt. 16:28) This promise was evidently fulfilled in the vision that Peter, James, and John experienced. They did not see Jesus in his actual kingdom, but they did see him miraculously transfigured before them in the glory of his Messianic office. Because of what they saw, Peter was prompted to say later, when writing his epistle, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and [presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

CONVINCED

It is clear that what Peter saw in the transfiguration vision had assured him that Jesus truly was the Messiah, and that in due time the glory and majesty of his kingdom, which they had seen only in a mental picture, would become a reality. One of the elements of the vision which probably had helped to convince Peter of this was the appearance of Moses and Elias—the Greek name for

Elijah. The Jews had earlier sent priests and Levites to John the Baptist asking him who he claimed to be. He said, "I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No."—John 1:19-21

Moses tells us of a promise concerning "that prophet" which God made to him. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut. 18:18,19) To the devout Jews who knew of the promises of God, this prophecy took on a very important meaning. In addition to the Messiah himself, they looked also for the coming of "that prophet," though they are both titles for the same being—Christ Jesus. Hence, inquiry was made of John the Baptist as to whether or not he was this great one of whom Moses spoke.

Continuing the prophetic thread, we find also a promise concerning the coming of an "Elijah." In Malachi 4:5,6, we read: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Because of this prophecy, the Jews also looked for the coming of "Elijah," so John the Baptist was also asked concerning him, "Art thou" Elijah?

Thus it is, that in the great array of Messianic promises and prophecies of the Old Testament,

three important figures stand out—the Messiah, one like Moses as “that prophet,” and “Elijah.” No careful student of the prophecies could be fully assured that Jesus truly was the Messiah if “that prophet” and “Elijah” did not in some way enter into his kingdom plans. Therefore, in the transfiguration scene of the kingdom, Peter, James, and John saw that in addition to the Messiah these other two figures had a part, for they appeared in the vision with Jesus. Indeed, the entire prophetic testimony concerning the Creator’s kingdom plan as it centered in Christ was accounted for in that wondrous vision of the kingdom. They had not followed “cunningly devised fables.”

A LAWGIVER

Moses was Israel’s lawgiver, and this will be one of the functions of the Messiah throughout the age of his kingdom. This is explained in the prophecy concerning “a Prophet, . . . like unto” Moses. In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter quotes the prophecy and shows that its fulfillment will come through Christ following his Second Advent. The quotation is in Peter’s sermon concerning “the times of restitution of all things” which, he declares, had been “spoken by the mouth of all [God’s] holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20,21

After making this sweeping statement concerning God’s promises of restitution, the first proof text Peter quotes is the prophecy of Moses concerning “that prophet.” It is interesting to note the full implications of that wonderful prophecy: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you

of your brethren.” (Acts 3:22) This promise applied to the Israelites of Moses’ day to whom it was addressed, and shows also that the great “Prophet” of promise would be raised up from a later generation, which was true of Jesus.

This denotes that in order for the Israelites of Moses’ day to receive the fulfillment of the promise of a future “Prophet,” it will be necessary for them to be raised from the dead. Peter knew that the prophetic testimony concerning “restitution” included an awakening of the dead, for he surely knew of another wonderful Old Testament promise: “The ransomed of the LORD shall return, . . . with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:10

This is not an assurance of universal salvation for all mankind, not even for the Israelites. After they are awakened from the sleep of death, they will need to obey that Prophet, otherwise they will be “destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:23) This point is covered in the original prophecy spoken by Moses, using the expression, “I will require it of him.”—Deut. 18:19

THE ELIJAH TYPE

The Prophet Elijah was used mightily to restore the worship of the true God in Israel. We recall the courageous manner in which he challenged the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel. (I Kings 18:25-40) This agrees with the prophecy concerning the anti-typical Elijah, of whom it was foretold that he would turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the

fathers—in other words, he would do a work of reformation.

To a small degree, John the Baptist conducted a work of reformation in Israel by his ministry of repentance. Throughout the Gospel Age the faithful followers of the Master, in proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, have likewise called upon the people to repent. (Acts 17:30) However, both of these efforts have been largely ineffective so far as the vast majority of the people are concerned. The full work of reformation, and of turning the people to the worship of the true God, remains to be accomplished during the Messianic kingdom. While there will be appropriate agencies in that kingdom to carry on this work, it will be actually centered in Christ, for he is that “true Light,” which eventually will enlighten “every man that cometh into the world.”—John 1:9

IMPORTANCE OF PROPHECY

By means of the transfiguration vision, God’s Word of prophecy had been confirmed and, as Peter indicates, the Lord’s people do well to take heed unto it, not for a little while, but until “the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” Without doubt, the faithful followers of the Master throughout the age have observed this wise counsel. The prophecies had revealed the great falling away from the faith which occurred beginning shortly after the death of the apostles. They foretold the rise and the fall of the great Antichrist system, and many of the details which would be associated therewith.

The prophecies told of the signs which would accompany the Master’s Second Presence, and that

he would be the chief reaper in a great “harvest” which would occur at the end of the present Gospel Age—starting at the beginning of his presence. Part of the work of this harvest would involve the bringing forth of his faithful followers from the sleep of death in what the Bible describes as the “first resurrection.” The prophecies also foretold that during his presence, following the completion of the harvest, Christ’s long-promised kingdom of peace would be established in the earth, and those who had been raised in the “first resurrection” would reign with him a thousand years.—Rev. 14:14-16; 20:4,6

These are referred to in the Scriptures as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 8:17) They will share with Christ in the work of “that prophet,” and in a worldwide project of filling the earth with the true knowledge of God, and restoring a united worship of the great Creator. (Zeph. 3:9) Thus will the darkness which has enshrouded the human race since Adam’s fall—the ignorance of the true God, and the sorrow and sighing of a dying race—be removed.

THE DAY DAWNS

This will be the glorious new day of the prophecies—the one referred to by David when he said that “joy cometh in the morning.” (Ps. 30:5) This day dawns much as does a literal day. Peter admonishes us that we should give heed to the sure word of prophecy until “the day dawns and the morning star arises” in our hearts. Here the reference is to the period just before the sun rises. It is then that the “morning star” appears, whom Jesus identified

as himself, when he testified, “I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”—Rev. 22:16

In the natural realm, according to astronomers, the morning star is most often identified as the planet Venus which, when it appears in the morning sky, is the brightest heavenly body in the pre-sunrise hours. At these times, it rises in the east around 4:30 A.M., and is observable until the sun rises. It is the last star-like object visible before the morning light of the sun washes out the nighttime objects. Thus, when the morning star is shining it is still measurably dark, because the sun has not yet risen above the horizon.

These details of the natural heavens coincide with the particulars of the prophetic day mentioned in our text. In this case, the world in general does not even recognize the presence of Christ, the “star” that betokens the approach of a new day. They are not “watching” for the day, but still “sleeping” in the darkness of night. The Lord’s own people do not see him literally, but because they are watching and not asleep as others, by the eye of faith, they discern the prophetic signs which indicate his presence. Peter puts it beautifully when he says that he rises in our hearts.

It should be noted that our text indicates the “dawn” of the new day and the appearance of the “morning star” both occur during the same period—just before sunrise. The Greek word translated “dawn” in this verse means—according to Professor Strong—to “glimmer through.” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* further defines the word as “day-light breaking through the darkness of night.” In

astronomical terms, “dawn” is similarly defined as that period of the early morning characterized by the presence of weak sunlight, while the sun itself is still below the horizon. During dawn it is possible to see approximately in which direction the sun lies, though it has not yet risen.

In the prophetic “dawn” of our text, the world in general does not even note the first gray streaks of light, for it is a time fraught with trouble. To those uninstructed by the sure word of prophecy, it seems as though the darkness is more dense than it has ever been before. Indeed, in many respects this is true.

We see in this a further fulfillment of the sure word of prophecy which foretold that Satan’s world order must be destroyed in a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21,22) So it is, as foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, that while “the morning cometh,” there is “also the night.” (Isa. 21:12) The word “morning” in this text is translated from a Hebrew word meaning “dawn,” according to Professor Strong. Thus, we have confirmation that the period described prophetically in the Scriptures as “dawn” occurs during the final hours of nighttime darkness. It is our belief that we are now in that dark period of human experience. However, through the sure word of prophecy we are privileged to discern the “morning star” and are assured that the present travail of sorrow upon mankind is the harbinger of that glorious new day of blessing.

The Scriptures are concise in their use of these symbolisms. The “morning star” and “dawn” illustrations used by Peter are most evident in

connection with the present time of human experience, whereas the reality of the full burst of day is pictured by the actual rising of the sun. In a text already quoted, we are told of that glorious time when the “Sun of righteousness” shall “arise with healing in his wings.” (Mal. 4:2) Therefore, it is appropriate to say that now we are in the “morning star” and “dawn” period of the Master’s presence. This “star” has risen in our hearts and is visible to us, as is the “dawn” and its associated light. All of this means that the rising of the “Sun” is near, when the full, glorious rays of healing will begin that period of joy in human experience, and when “all the kindreds of the earth” will be blessed.—Acts 3:25

To some, it may seem unnecessary to make such fine distinctions between terms such as “morning star,” “dawn,” the rising of the “Sun,” and how they each relate to the Second Presence of Christ. However, as we have noted, it is the Scriptures themselves which make these distinctions, and how beautifully they do so! The Word of God weaves together the prophetic testimony of both the Old and New Testaments into a harmonious whole, by which we can discern, through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, the many processes involved in connection with the entirety of Christ’s invisible presence in the affairs of earth. Taken together, these distinct processes, and yet their consistent order and harmony one with the other, provide a faith-strengthening assurance that God, through the instrument of his glorified Son, has all things related to his plan for man’s salvation well in hand.

BLESSINGS OF THE NEW DAY

As we have noted, Peter referred to the purpose of the new day as that of bringing about the “restitution,” or restoration, “of all things,” explaining that this great restoration project had been foretold by all of God’s holy prophets. This testimony of the prophets is also part of the sure word of prophecy to which we do well to take heed. Just as the present dark Time of Trouble came upon mankind in fulfillment of what the Lord had foretold in his Word, so likewise the blessings of the new day are sure to come in God’s own due time.

How the world of mankind will then rejoice! There will come global and lasting peace. Blind eyes will be opened, and deaf ears will be unstopped. “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” (Isa. 35:5,6) Death will be destroyed, and tears will be wiped from all faces. (Micah 4:1-4; Isa. 25:8,9) Eventually, as that new day progresses, all the dead will be awakened and given an opportunity, through obedience, to be restored to perfection—that which Adam lost when he transgressed divine law. This “restoration” to perfection and everlasting human life will be the climax of the restitution spoken of by Peter.

The soothing rays of the “Sun of righteousness” will shine upon every continent of earth, and its light and life-giving power will be felt by the whole suffering world of mankind. The enlightening influence of that “Sun” will fill the earth with a knowledge of the glory of God. This means that all “doctrines of devils,” all the “nighttime” traditions and superstitions, all human creeds and dogmas, and all the precepts of men by which people are

taught to fear God rather than love him, are to be swept away. These will all be replaced by a true knowledge of God and of his righteous laws.—Isa. 11:9

With a knowledge of the glory of God filling the earth, there will come also the clearing out of all the myriad citadels of sin, vice, and crime. As the glorious “Sun of righteousness” shines forth its enlightening and healing rays into every corner of the earth, all vestiges of Satanic darkness will give place to the glorious enlightenment of the new day. There will not be a nook or corner of the earth where the light from that glorious “Sun” will not penetrate. Truly God’s prophetic Word reveals a glorious new day for the human race! Let us each be faithful “watchers,” viewing by faith the “morning star,” risen in our hearts, and beholding the dawning light of the new day just beyond these final hours of night. ■