

## An Exposition of Isaiah xxiv—xxvii

## IV

## SONGS OF THE DAY (CHAPS. XXV. 9—XXVI. 6).

THE Earth which was emptied of those who destroyed it has been filled with light and love and law. Light streams from Mount Zion into all the world ; all hearts love and turn to the light, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. Law goes out from Zion, and the word of power from Jerusalem. Judgments are delivered and decisions are made there, the last argument of war is needless. In this mountain is seen Jesus, the Christ ; here in the risen and glorified saints is tangible demonstration of the life that is life indeed.

Shall not Earth break forth into singing ?

For, lo, the winter is past ;  
 The rain is over and gone ;  
 The flowers appear on the earth ;  
 The time of the singing of birds is come,  
 And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land ;  
 The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs,  
 And the vines are in blossom ;  
 They give forth their fragrance.

Songs there shall be. Of one song it is said " In that day shall the song be sung in the land of Judah," but for the other no locality is defined.

And here we must pause to notice an important new element in the prophet's message. Hitherto he has been shewn the wide earth, the peoples and the nations ; and his message has been of it and of them. Lately he has been led to predict that Jehovah will rule the world from Mount Zion and Jerusalem, and that in this mountain the feast for the nations will be spread, and the veil that covers their eyes removed. Now we are to hear of *the land of Judah*, and of the thoughts and aspirations, the confessions and the testimony, of those who live there. In Isaiah's day the land of Judah was still the land of the Jews ; it is therefore evident that we are to understand that among the songs of the renewed earth the song of the Jews will be special and unique.

This is always to be remembered. Our Lord Jesus " said that He was King of the Jews," and in saying this He was neither deceiver

nor deceived. The message to His mother straight from the eternal throne declared that "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." The aged Simeon foretold that He should be not only "a light for revelation to the Gentiles," but in due time also "the glory of God's people Israel." And St. Paul was commissioned to endorse the predictions of the earlier prophets, and to tell that the hardening of heart of Israel was not for ever, but that in due time "there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this is the covenant of God to them when He shall take away their sins." The day is yet to come when Jerusalem shall see Jesus, and shall acclaim Him Blessed; and when He, and no other, in the Father's appointed time, shall restore the Kingdom to Israel. And so St. Peter, commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself, taught and controlled by the Holy Spirit of truth, preached that the times of refreshing for Israel are to be when Jesus Christ comes from heaven, and that those will be the times of the restoration of all things, of which God has continually spoken by the prophets. When "the fulness of the Gentiles" comes in, Israel shall be saved; when "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the nations no more.<sup>1</sup> So Jerusalem shall become the throne of Jehovah, and Israel shall be the people of Jehovah, and in the land of Judah shall be sung a special song of Jehovah.

But now we return to Earth's songs in her day of restoration. The Song of Those who Waited.

*And it shall be said in that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him,  
And He will save us.  
This is Jehovah; we have waited for Him,  
We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.*

Waiting has ever been characteristic of God's people. Abraham and Isaac were taught to wait. Nearly all Jacob's troubles came from his natural inability to wait. Yet even he learns this lesson at the end, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Jehovah." Israel had to wait long for the Christ. Through nearly two millenniums His Church has waited for Him to come again from Heaven. Our Lord Jesus summed up Christian experience as "enduring to the end."

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 32, 33, ii. 29-32; Rom. xi. 25-27; Matt. xxiii. 38, 39; Acts i. 6, 7, iii. 17-21; Rom. xi. 25; Luke xxi. 24.

We walk by faith, and in hope, and not by sight. But in that day it shall be said, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us ; this is Jehovah, the Lord of the Promise, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

It is to be noticed exactly what the salvation is which is here anticipated, and upon the enjoyment of which these glad singers are about to enter. It is not their personal salvation as individuals, for at the time of which the prophet speaks this has already been perfected. Already they have received their adoption, death for them has been swallowed up for ever. The long-expected Saviour had already come for them from heaven, and their bodies of humiliation had been already conformed to the Body of His glory.<sup>1</sup> But even before this happy consummation, and much more so after its blissful experience, they will have become conformed to the heart and mind of their Lord. Long ago they learned to expect with Him the time when all things shall be put under His feet. The primeval promise, they knew, covered more than the salvation of an elect people ; it had led them to look for the bruising of the serpent's head, for the deliverance of the human race, for the triumph of good over evil, for the vindication of the ways of God in the world ; and for this they had waited, and now the long-looked-for day had dawned ; for this their Lord had brought them back to their old home, the scene of their former testimony and tears, and brought them to it with a deepened sense of the unity of the whole human family ; Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us, our whole race and ancient home ; this is Jehovah, the promised *Saviour of the World* ; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation, as He spreads His feast for all nations, strips the covering from their eyes, wipes tears from off all faces, makes the whole world His people and His home.

*For in this mountain will the Hand of Jehovah rest ; and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill. And He shall spread forth His hands in the midst thereof, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim ; and He <sup>2</sup> will lay low his pride together with the craft of his hands. And the high fortress of thy walls hath He brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust.*

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 23 ; Phil. iii. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Following the A.V., for it seems better to regard Jehovah Himself as the swimmer. The Amer. Standard Version has "*but Jehovah,*" taking the preceding clause to refer to Moab ; but A.V. and English R.V. "*and He shall.*"

The Kingdom will not come until the strong Hand of Jehovah has been laid upon the world. It shall rear in Mount Zion, notably at its first exhibition of power,<sup>1</sup> and thereafter as its central home. There will be a treading down as straw is trodden in the dunghill, a scattering as water yields to the powerful strokes of the swimmer, a laying low of pride and of contrivance. The high-raised fortress towers shake and fall, they lower their proud crests, they come ruining to the ground, they lie prostrate in the dust.

*Moab* shall be trodden down. In such a context as this it seems necessary to take this name as symbolical. It is clear that in some at least of the preceding prophecies, notably the burden of Babylon and the burden of Tyre, which precede and close the series, the prophet's words pass from the literal town or kingdom to that which it symbolizes. In those burdens however the literal and the symbolic, although connected, are without difficulty separated; but in the present prophecy, besides the mention of Zion and Jerusalem and the land of Judah, there is no specific local reference. The prophet's words throughout refer to the world at large, with the sole exception of this mention of Moab, and of Egypt and Assyria at its close. We shall see later that Egypt and Assyria in that connection seem to be representative, and in the present case we think that Moab must be taken in the same sense.

Three things are asserted of Moab here, his pride, the craft of his hands, and the high fortress of his walls. Moab stands for the "pride" of man, which essays to do without God. "The craft of his hands" marks man's extraordinary development of mechanical contrivance, and skilful use of the powers of nature. "The high fortress of his walls" denotes the towering social or political structures which he raises. Moab is fitly chosen to be the symbol of these things, for Isaiah writes of Moab in his day, "We have heard of the pride of Moab, that he is very proud; even of his arrogancy, and his pride, and his wrath." And at a later date the prophet Zephaniah marks "their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of Jehovah of hosts"; and Jeremiah quotes and amplifies the words of his great predecessor, "We have heard of the pride of Moab, that he is very proud; his loftiness, and his pride, and his arrogancy, and the haughtiness of his heart;"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> xxix. 1-8; Ezek. xxxviii.; Zech. xiv.; Matt. xxiv. 15-30.

<sup>2</sup> xvi. 6; Zeph. ii. 8, 10; Jer. xlvi. 29, 30.

while Mesba himself betrays the national character by the inscription on his famous stone.

So then, before the Kingdom comes, "Jehovah hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." "The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day."<sup>1</sup>

### The Song in the Land of Judah.

*In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah ;*

*We have a strong city ;*

*Salvation will He appoint for walls and bulwarks.*

*Open ye the gates,*

*That the righteous nation which keepeth faith may enter in.*

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on Thee ;*

*Because he trusteth in Thee.*

*Trust ye in Jehovah for ever ;*

*For in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock.*

At length Israel is at peace, firm on the everlasting Rock. For long years they stumbled at Jesus Christ, the Stone of Stumbling, but now they know that he that rests on It, he that believes on Him, shall not be ashamed. They went about to establish their own righteousness, now they take refuge in a city, whose walls are free salvation. Those who once would close the door of faith to the Gentiles now become the messengers of this Gospel to the world, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in Jehovah for ever, for in Jehovah, even Jehovah is an everlasting rock."

*For Jehovah hath brought down them that dwell on high, the lofty city ; He layeth it low, He layeth it low, even to the ground ; He bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down ; even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.*

The Jews will not have escaped the sin of the world. They will have taken their full share in the building of the lofty city, the pride, the craft of hand, the high fortress-walls of human endeavour divorced from God. And they will have seen its overthrow, laid low, to the ground, to the dust ; and the poor and needy, who knew no confidence but God, erect upon its ruins.

### A PRAYING WORLD (CHAP. XXVI. 7-16.)

The Apostle Peter has told us that the prophets, when borne by the Holy Spirit, and becoming the mouthpiece of that Spirit as He

<sup>1</sup> xxiii. 9 ; ii. 11.

bore His witness to the sufferings and glories of the Christ, were not so carried away or so possessed by Him as to lose their own consciousness. While the stream of enlightenment and of prediction flowed through them, not by their will, but by the will of God, all the time their mind was awake and their thought busy. They prophesied, when the Hand of the Lord was upon them, and at the same time they searched and inquired into the message they were uttering.

The present prophecy affords illustrations of this fact. The majestic stream of prediction flows from the prophet's lips, but he is awake and intent, conscious and feeling. Does the Spirit testify that the remnant in every land shall lift up their voice and shout, and from all places overseas applaud the majesty of Jehovah? The man of God is quick to point the lesson, and call the world of his own day to glorify Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> Does the Spirit let him hear already the songs of that day when there shall be glory to the righteous? This does not annul the pain of the present; "But I said, I pine away, I pine away, woe is me! the treacherous dealers deal treacherously."<sup>2</sup>

He tells in rapt vision of the overthrow of the lofty, and the glory of Jehovah's Kingdom, but he is ready at once with his own worshipping praise, "O Jehovah, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name."<sup>3</sup>

And now, when through the prophet has flowed the melody of that song in the land of Judah, he adds his own Amen.

*The way of the righteous is a right way; the path of the righteous Thou directest aright.*<sup>4</sup>

The righteous way is bound in the end to be the right way; and the reason for this is found in the fact of the over-ruling Hand of Jehovah. This is the thought of the prophet's Amen, and it answers to the very heart of the song of Judah. Our strong city, so those singers sang, is not built by craft of hands; but it is ramparted with the salvation of Jehovah. The stranger to God can find no admission, but its gates stand open wide to the righteous nation which keeps faith with Him. Those who are heart-loyal to His precepts, who remain sure that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who obey Him, who through all *trust Him*, committing their whole

<sup>1</sup> xxiv. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 16.

<sup>3</sup> xxv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> We here follow the marginal rendering of the R.V., which gives a clear and definite sense. The word translated "righteous" is in the original the same as in v. 2.

way to Him, these are kept in perfect peace, these rest firm on a Rock of Ages. Even so, says the prophet, so is it, so shall it be, the way of the righteous is a right way; the path of the righteous Thou directest aright.

Then, in the same strain of reverent acquiescence in the revealed purposes of God, the prophet continues, speaking still to the great Revealer, into whose secrets He is being admitted.<sup>1</sup>

*Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for Thee; to Thy Name, even to Thy Memorial Name, is the desire of our soul.*

The prophet sees that the pride of man must first be laid low, and his lofty city brought to the ground, to the very dust, before these songs are sung in a new world; and he sees that it is Jehovah Himself who must do this thing. He acquiesces in the revelation; he confesses that this is the immemorial witness and faith of the prophets. They looked for the personal intervention of Jehovah, "we have waited for Thee"; they expected His manifestation in judgments, "in the way of Thy judgments have we waited for Thee." "To Thy Name, even to Thy Memorial Name, is the desire of our soul." The memorial name is JEHOVAH. From the very beginning this Name seems to have been associated with the Promise of the Woman's Seed.<sup>2</sup> From earliest days men called upon this Name and waited for the salvation of Jehovah.<sup>3</sup> It was in this Name that judgments fell upon Egypt, and Israel came out from bondage<sup>4</sup>; on this Name they were taught for evermore to hope; to this Name through all the centuries all waiting souls had turned.<sup>5</sup>

Not only traditional faith, however, but sad experience also, had taught the prophet to hope only for Jehovah, and in the way of His judgments to wait for His salvation. In a long ministry he had found out how hardly the inhabitants of the world learned righteousness, and how little the prophetic messages availed to turn a nation's heart to God. The messages of grace, the example of a God-fearing king, produced no general reform. Judgments alone seemed able to awake the slumbering conscience of the nation, and too often even the uplifting of Jehovah's hand to smite passed still unheeded.<sup>6</sup> So the prophet returns to his hope in the coming of Jehovah.

<sup>1</sup> Amos iii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iv. 1. Did Eve indeed say, "I have gotten a man, even Jehovah?"

<sup>3</sup> Ib. iv. 26, xlix. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. iii. 13-22, vi. 2-8.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. xxx. 4, xcvi. 12; cii. 12; cxxxv. 13; Isa. xxv. 9; Hos. xii. 5.

<sup>6</sup> xxii. 11.

*With my soul have I desired Thee in the night, for it is still night in the prophet's world; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee earnestly; for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah. Jehovah, Thy hand is lifted up, yet they see not; but they shall see Thy zeal for the people, and be put to shame; yea, fire shall devour Thine adversaries. Jehovah, Thou wilt ordain peace for us; for Thou hast also wrought all our works for us.*

The experience of Isaiah, thus recorded, is prophetic. It is the experience of all ages to the end. "The people" of Jehovah and "the inhabitants of the world" are ever contrasted. There is a perpetual conflict of ideals between them. The one part keep faith with God, the other part will not acknowledge His law, and learn righteousness in the fear of Him. The Gospel call is sounded; political, economic, social conditions are made favourable; religious aids are provided; but by a strange perversity men will not behold the majesty of Jehovah. Jehovah lifts His hand again and again to show that the way of righteousness is the right way, and that wrongdoing is ruin, but still they cannot see. "The people" are still peculiar in the world, the mass remain in opposition. Where shall we turn but where Isaiah, moved by the Spirit, turned for hope? Jehovah, Thou wilt ordain peace for us; for Thou hast also wrought all our works for us. Jehovah Jesus, throned above! Who hast procured for us salvation, perseverance, resurrection, glory; Thou hast laid upon us to labour for righteousness, and we find not peace but a sword; but Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for Thou hast wrought all our works for us, and this work too shalt be Thine.

For hearken, the prophet is speaking again, but not now in his own person and of his own time. The Spirit is speaking through him once more with voices of the days to come. It is the heart-cry of a world that has learned righteousness at last, and at length has come to walk humbly with its God. Jehovah has ordained peace for His people, Jehovah has done for them the work they could not do; lo! the inhabitants of the world have themselves become the people of Jehovah, listen to the world at prayer.

*O Jehovah 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 and destroyed them, and made all remembrance of them to perish.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ii. 18-22; viii. 19, 20; Jer. x. 11; xvi. 19, 20; I Cor. viii. 5.



Jehovah was known as the God of Israel, now He is acknowledged as God of all the earth. In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah and amongst His ancient people, He has been made known in the sight of all the nations, and they are acknowledging it now :—

*Thou hast increased The Nation, O Jehovah, Thou hast increased The Nation ; Thou art glorified ; Thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land.*<sup>1</sup>

Not that Israel had more righteousness than other nations, or possessed any peculiar instinct for monotheism or natural understanding of spiritual truth more than other races ; but they have had their special visitation ; and they have become broken in spirit ;

*Jehovah, in trouble have they visited Thee ; they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them.*

Gentile and Jew are lifting hands of prayer, and so

*“ the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”*

W. S. MOULE.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.*

*(To be continued.)*

