

THE GLORY THAT LIGHTENS THE EARTH

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A little over a century ago God led Wm. Miller to a study of the prophecies, which brought to him a deep conviction that the second coming of Christ was at hand. After several years of earnest investigation, he began to proclaim his views of the prophecies, and was joined by other earnest, godly men. In a few short years the message of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ was proclaimed around the world.

A spirit of earnestness and solemnity attended the message, and thousands of sincere, honest souls sought the preparation necessary to meet their Lord. Their interpretation of the prophetic date was correct, but they learned by a terrible disappointment that the event so definitely pointed to in the prophecy was not the coming of Christ to this world, but to the most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary, to begin His work of the investigative judgment, which must take place before His return to this earth.

Following the disappointment, some were discouraged and dropped out of the movement, while others pressed forward. They understood that the three great and solemn messages of Revelation 14 must go to all the world, as God's last call of mercy before probation would forever close for the human race. Additional light came to them regarding God's Law, the Sabbath, and other truths.

In those early days the conviction was strong that time was short and the end of the world very near. They declared with solemn and thrilling earnestness that what was to be done must be done quickly, for "only a moment of time, as it were, remains." But their numbers were not great, and their resources were very limited. The task seemed herculean, and yet God blessed their efforts, and they were often cheered to see the evidences of His presence and blessing.

But there is always a tendency in human nature to become complacent, and to trust in human machinery and resources to accomplish God's work. Years passed, and still vast sections of the world were untouched, and the prospect was not encouraging for the work to be finished quickly.

Following the time when God summoned His people to give the great Three-fold Message to prepare for the coming of Christ, He also sent a very definite message to His church to prepare them for their great work. It clearly revealed the condition of the church, and the great transformation necessary in order for them to fulfill His commission. But the church was so busy, as she thought, carrying out God's plan, that His message to her was to a great extent neglected or ignored. This fact explains why the coming of Christ has been delayed so long. Until God's people obey the message given to them, the divine power necessary for the finishing of the work cannot be imparted to them.

The Laodicean Message

The movement had not progressed. many years when the Lord through His servant sent this solemn message to the church:

"I saw that the testimony of the True Witness had not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed if not entirely disregarded: all who truly receive it, will obey it, and be purified." Early Writings 107.

The words addressed to the Laodicean church describe their present condition perfectly. (See Revelation 3:14-20.) They are "neither cold nor hot," but "lukewarm". And unless they heed the counsel of the "faithful and true Witness," and zealously repent and obtain "gold tried in the fire," "white raiment," and "eye-salve," He will spew them out of His mouth. Early Writings 107.

Again in 1859 this message was sent to His people:

"I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time, and the reason it has not accomplished a greater work is because of the hardness of their hearts. . . . This fearful message will do its work. When it was first presented it led to close examination of heart. Sins were confessed and the people of God were stirred everywhere. Nearly all believed that this message would end in the loud cry of the third angel. But as they failed to see the powerful work accomplished in a short time, many lost the effect of the message." 1 Testimonies: 186.

What is revealed in this message to the Laodicean church? Since this is the message "on which the destiny of the church hangs" we cannot be too much in earnest in our endeavor to understand it, and earnestly follow the counsel of the True Witness. Many have seemed to think of it as a message of severe condemnation, which could not apply to the remnant church, but only to a few who are blind and hypocritical, but this is a superficial view and a serious error.

It is important first of all to remember that the message to the Laodicean church points out no heresy or false teaching such as is revealed in several other periods. These Laodiceans are like the foolish virgins in the parable of Matthew 25:

"The foolish virgins do not represent those who are hypocritical. They had a regard for truth, they advocated the truth, they were intending to go forth to meet the bridegroom, they were attached to those who believed the truth, and go with them, having lamps, which represent a knowledge of the truth. Then there was a revival in the church, their feelings were stirred; but they failed to have the oil in their vessels, because they did not bring the principles of godliness into their daily life and character. Review & Herald, Sept. 17, 1895.

The reproof, and warning, and appeal of the Laodicean message all deal with appalling failure to appreciate and measure up to the holy requirements for God's representatives in the closing hours of the world. They reveal the terrible danger of feeling complacent, and satisfied, and self-righteous because we know that we have the truth, while at the same time we may be destitute of the very essentials of salvation. This was the very condition of the Jewish priests leaders at the time of the first Advent, which led them to deny and reject and crucify their Messiah.

"Many believe that they are on the right foundation, that they have the truth; they rejoice in its clearness, and boast of the powerful arguments in proof of the correctness of our position. Such reckon themselves among the chosen, peculiar people of God, yet they experience not His presence and power to save them from yielding to temptation and folly. These profess to know God yet in works they deny Him. How great is their darkness!" 2 Testimonies: 125.

The Actual Condition and God's Counsel

"Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

How amazing that an intelligent people, who profess to believe God, should receive such a message from God, and still continue in that condition!

"I counsel thee to buy of Me gold, tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

What amazing love and mercy, that the True Witness will not cast His children away, but "rebukes and chastens" them, and pleads with them to "be zealous, and repent."

First of all He counsels us to obtain gold, which represents spiritually love and faith. How much we need this emphasis on love, for "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." In the final climax of this great movement, we shall find that only as we are sustained and empowered by divine love can we endure the test. All though the years the message has been kept before us, "lack of love and faith are the great sins of which God's people are now guilty." 1 Testimonies: 475.

And faith is equally important, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him." Then we are counselled to obtain the "white raiment" that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." How utterly hopeless is the man who comes to the marriage feast clad in the garment of his own righteousness which is but filthy rags."

"And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Well may we pray now, and constantly for that anointing, for if ever the eternal destiny of a people depended upon seeing clearly, it is now. And one thing we need to see is that when we respond fully to God's message to His church, the divine power will come and the work will quickly be finished.

The Loud Cry Message of 1888

About thirty years after the message began to come from the servant of the Lord that we were in the Laodicean condition, and pleading for a decided reformation, a wonderful message came to our people at the General Conference in Minneapolis in 1888. The great emphasis was upon Justification and Righteousness by faith in Christ. The teaching was done largely by Elders A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner.

No doubt all understand today, at least theoretically, that Righteousness by Faith is the white raiment which the True Witness counsels the people to obtain. But we need to realize that one who is a Laodicean, feeling "rich and increased with goods" and "in need of nothing" will not find it easy to sense his spiritual destitution and his need of the heavenly gifts offered. It is not strange, therefore, that while Mrs. White and a few leaders were enthusiastic in receiving the instruction as precious, additional light from heaven, many others took a different attitude.

Some said that they had always preached Justification, and it had been one of our accepted doctrines, which was doubtless true. It is also true that many profess to believe doctrines which they do not practice. How many today declare their faith in the testimonies, and believe in Health Reform, but those who associate with them observe that their lives do not conform to their profession. Others said we had the great pillars of our faith, the Second Advent Message, the Sabbath, the Law, the State of

the Dead, etc., and it would be a great mistake to emphasize these matters of personal experience, and thus divert attention from the great foundation doctrines of the movement.

Much might be written regarding what took place at Minneapolis, and following that meeting, but space does not permit. What we wish to emphasize is that God called a people to give the Advent Message in 1844, and it was His desire that they should quickly carry the light to the whole world, and finish the work. That is stated in the following quotation.

"If all who had labored unitedly in the work in 1844 had received the third angel's message, and had proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily through their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people." Great Controversy. 457-8.

Now the Lord was bringing a message designed to arouse His people and inspire them to go forward and finish the work, and very solemn and startling statements were made concerning it.

"The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the Righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. For it is the work of every one to whom the message of warning has come, to lift up Jesus, to present him to the world as revealed in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelations of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to his disciples and in the wonderful miracles wrought for the sons of men. Search the Scriptures; for they are they that testify of him." Review & Herald, November 22, 1892

"This Message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the Third Angel's Message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure." Testimonies to Ministers. 91, 92.

It is evident that God intended this precious revelation of the righteousness of Christ should lead His people into an experience so real and personal that the very character of Jesus should be revealed in each one. Since it is the Character of Christ which constitutes His glory, the whole earth would have been lightened with the glory of God as reflected through Christ's character in His people.

Now let us notice the response of God's people to this precious message given in 1888, which we are told was the beginning of the Loud Cry.

"To our brethren who are standing in this self-confident, self-satisfied position, who walk and act as if there was no need of more light, we want to say that the Laodicean message is applicable to you." Review & Herald, April 1, 1890.

"Since the time of the Minneapolis meeting (Nov. 1888) I have seen the state of the Laodicean church as never before. I have heard the rebuke of God spoken to those who feel so well satisfied, who know not their spiritual destitution." Review & Herald, Aug. 26, 1890

We do not mean to imply for a moment that this great message has not been progressing through all these years, for that would not be true. It has made great progress, and all over the world has been attended by the blessing of God, and has wrought mighty miracles of transformation, not only in individuals but in large territories. But the fact still remains that there has been a delay, and God has been disappointed in His people. Notice this statement:

"The lesson of this record is for us. The Lord had prepared the way before His people. They were very near the promised land. A little while and they would have entered Canaan. They themselves delayed the entering. Had they put their trust in God they could have gone straight in. God would have gone before them. . . . Brethren and sisters, from the light given me I know that if the people of God had preserved a living connection with Him, if they had obeyed His word, they could today be in the heavenly Canaan." General Conference Bulletin. March, 30, 1903.

Further Light On the Situation

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14:6.

This angel symbolized the remnant people of God who carry the message of the second coming of Christ to the whole world. For a hundred years that "angel" has been giving the Advent message. Then the time came in 1888 for another angel to appear:

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Revelation 18:1, 2.

Here again God's remnant people are symbolized by an angel coming down from heaven and giving an additional message. What we wish to consider in this connection is the description of this angel, which reveals the characteristics of those giving the Loud Cry message.

First, he had great power. Second, the earth was lightened with his glory. We have long spoken of this as the Loud Cry and Latter Rain experience, which brings the glorious consummation of the gospel of salvation. In our study thus far we have noted from the Spirit of Prophecy that the Loud Cry is the wonderful message of Righteousness By Faith which the Lord brought definitely to His people at the General Conference in 1888.

More than sixty years [a lot more now! TC] have elapsed since that meeting, and there is reason to fear that, to the great majority of God's people, that momentous experience is but a historical incident in this great movement. Let us notice some of the very important matters involved in that experience.

We understand that the glory of God is His character. Under this Loud Cry message, the earth is to be lightened with the glory—or character, of God, and the message is to be given by His people. Let us also remember that those who give the Loud Cry Message must have on the robe of Christ's Righteousness, the wedding garment. In the last call of mercy to a doomed world, we cannot give people something which we do not possess. The Laodicean message calls upon every one of God's people to obtain the "white raiment" that we may be clothed. The saints are to be clothed here on earth, before the close of human probation, with the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness.

This robe can only be possessed by those who have crucified the flesh, who have died to sin, who have enthroned Christ in their hearts, and having become partakers of the divine nature, have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

This is not just a theory, or a doctrine, but an experience. But how many hold to human theories, and argue that sin can never be fully overcome in this life. We would do well to consider some of the plain facts God has revealed to us. Adam and Eve were made in the image of God. They were pure, holy, upright, sinless in their nature. But they disobeyed God and fell from their lofty estate. Now their nature was impure, fallen, degenerate, unholy, and lost. Then God revealed His plan for their salvation. What is salvation? Surely it could not be anything less than the restoration of that which they had lost—the image of God. So we read:

"Christ came that He might recreate the image of God in man." Desire of Ages. 498.

Probably all will agree that through the atonement and intercession of Christ, those who have died with all sins confessed and pardoned, will have God's image restored when they are resurrected and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. But what of those who live through the close of probation after our great High Priest has forever finished His ministry for sinners in the heavenly sanctuary? Will the saints sin and repent during the awful time of trouble, and the falling of the plagues? Here again the answer is clear and definite:

"I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary, through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God, and are protected in the time of trouble, must reflect the image of Jesus fully." Early Writings 71.

What a glorious possibility: the image of God fully restored in His people! That image of God is the righteousness of Christ, which He has been urging us to seek and obtain the past sixty years. It is the character of Jesus, which lightens the earth with His glory, as it is reflected in His people who are giving the Loud Cry Message.

Could the human mind conceive of anything more thrilling and wonderful than this? We are living in the last hours of time. The great rebel leader has dragged the inhabitants of this fallen world to the farthest limits of rebellion against heaven. Soon probation will close. All will then be under the control of the enemy but the little remnant who have been loyal to their Master.

Now the great infinite God has determined that in this final climax of eternity, He will demonstrate the glory of His character through this remnant. Here the onlooking universe see demonstrated the depth of God's compassion, and His unfathomable love and mercy in giving His beloved Son to die for sinners. They see His mighty power and grace in restoring His image in fallen men, enabling them to join with the unfallen worlds in endless praise and love to their Creator.

"Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul-temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell on the disciples on the day of Pentecost." 5 Testimonies: 214, 216.

Let us remember that God can never lighten the earth with His glory through a people who have sin in their lives. We must have the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. Then when the mighty pentecostal power comes, it will magnify, and glorify our divine Master, whose righteousness only is reflected from our lives.