

The Rising of The Sun of Righteousness

One of the major themes which run throughout Scripture is that of Light and Darkness, and the relationship that exists between the two. So, on the first day of Creation, we have the first spoken words that are recorded in Scripture:

“And *Elohim* said, Let there be light: and there was light. And *Elohim* saw the light, that it was good: and *Elohim* divided the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:3-5).

In these words, we have a number of principles that are fundamental to the rest of Bible teaching. Firstly, we find that it is Light which is “good”, and not Darkness. And secondly, the Creator Himself placed a division between light and darkness.

These things are again picked up by the inspired Apostle in 2 Corinthians 4, in speaking of the way in which the Gospel was preached, and received:

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

So then, there is a parallel between the way in which in Creation the Word spoken by *Elohim* provided light, and the way in which in the New Creation, the preaching of the Gospel is also a source of light, even a light which illuminates the darkest recesses of the hearts of men who receive it. The “good” light is “the light of the glorious gospel (i.e. “Good News”) of Christ that shines unto us (2 Cor. 4:4). And just as in Creation, there was a Divinely Ordained division between light and darkness, even so there ought to be a division between those who receive the Light of the Gospel, and those who choose to remain in the shadowy camouflage of a spiritual darkness. So the Apostle was caused to write elsewhere:

“be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? ***And what communion hath light with darkness?***” (2 Cor. 6:14)

And again:

“... have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, ***but rather reprove them***” (Eph. 5:11)

In the natural order of things, plants cannot flower and bring forth fruit in darkness. Light is needed for the fruition of all plants, and so it is in things Divine. Left to its own devices, the flesh, containing “no good thing” (Rom. 7:18), can produce no good thing, being totally in the dark. It is utterly impotent as regards to the formation of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and in their natural state, it is said of men of the flesh, that they “cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known anything ...” (Eccl. 6:4-5).

For believers in Christ, however, the situation is very different. Yahweh is described in the Holy Writ as being “the *Father of Lights*, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning” (Jas. 1:17). And it logically follows therefore, that those who become adopted as His Children must be the “Children of Light”. So we read in the Apostle’s first Epistle to the Thessalonians:

“Ye are all the Children of Light, and the Children of the Day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (2 Thes. 5:5-8).

Under the cover of darkness, many unseen sins can be committed: “every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reprov’d”(Jno. 3:20). But for a lover of the Truth, he “cometh to the light, that his deeds might be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”. Light then, becomes the means by which men’s works may be revealed for what they really are. Under the scrutiny of the Light of the Word, those who sow to the Spirit have their deeds commended as being “wrought in God”. But for those who hide in the shade and cover of darkness, they hate the Light, and all who set it before them. Truly their minds are blinded by the god of this world, that they cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God – or as the Spirit writes: “the Light shineth in darkness; *and the darkness comprehended it not*” (Jno. 1:5).

The above passage from 2 Thessalonians chapter 5 brings our minds back to the events which took place at Belshazzar’s drunken feast, as recorded in Daniel chapter 5. Being “of the night” and “of darkness”, Belshazzar the king “made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.” He saw a vision of a hand writing undecipherable words upon the plaster of the wall, which terrified him to the extent that “his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another” (Dan. 5:6). In these things, we see how a work of darkness (the drunken feast) was about to be revealed for what it really was, by the Light of the Word. Belshazzar recognised that in Daniel could be found “*light* and understanding and excellent wisdom” (Dan. 5:14). The prophet Daniel had no part with this feast: he was not present, did not fellowship those who were drunk with the wine of Babylon, and had to be called for. Being a child of the Light, he did not drink wine with (cp Dan. 1), or fellowship those who dwelt in Babylonian darkness. Rather, he was under a Divine Commission to “reprove” them. This was the interpretation of that which was written: “God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it ... Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting ... Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Dan. 5:25-28). Here was a reproof indeed. Being drunken in the night, Belshazzar was found wanting, and unprepared for the coming judgements of Israel’s Deity.

We read in 2 Thessalonians chapter 5, that obedient believers are “of the day”. That is, their hearts and aspirations belong to the New Day that will commence with the rising up of the Sun of Righteousness. They “seek first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness”, and like Lot of old, their souls are sore vexed for the deeds of the

wicked. Our Master described the manner by which his disciples must themselves shine forth with the Light of the Gospel:

“Ye are the Light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ***Let your light so shine before men,*** that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5: 14-16).

The comparison being made here is twofold. Firstly, the believers are like a City built upon a high hill, whose lights can be seen for miles around. And secondly, they are like a lamp used to illuminate the House that those who dwell there can see what they are doing. There is, as one would expect, a twofold application: not only should the “children of light” illuminate the otherwise darkened world, they should also cause their light to shine before the Household of Faith also. The Apocalyptic symbol used to describe 7 ecclesias is that of a Lampstand (Rev. 1:20). Shining with the glorious light of the Word, the collective members of the ecclesia all contribute to the glow. Before the World at large, and in the Household also, there can be found a minority who hold forth the Word of Life (Phil. 2:16), and whose delight is to know and do the Will of their Father. They are the salt of the earth, being the only preserving element within the corrupting mass of society - despite being despised and rejected of men, as was their Master.

This aspect of a city shining with light upon a hill is something which finds its roots back in the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah. In Chapter 60, we have a description of Jerusalem to come, as the City of the Great King:

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Yahweh ***is risen*** upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but Yahweh ***shall arise*** upon thee, and His Glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness ***of thy rising***” (Isa. 60:1-3).

Notice the terms used, being reminiscent of the rising of the Sun: “Arise”; the Glory is “risen”; Yahweh “shall arise”; “the brightness of thy rising”. Clearly, it is the Sun of Righteousness being described here. But when we look at the passage a little closer, we find that there are actually two shinings. There is “the Glory of Yahweh” which is said to have arisen over Jerusalem, but there is also the direct command for the City to “arise, shine” herself. That is to say, Messiah will come as the Sun of Righteousness to illuminate the earth but Jerusalem being filled with glory as the capital city of the earth (Isa. 2), shall itself be a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. She also shall shine forth with the brilliance of Yahweh’s Glory throughout the Age to Come – and that, according to Messiah, is the way in which his disciples ought to shine with the glorious Gospel of Christ today.

The prophet Malachi speaks explicitly of the dawning of a New Day – the Day in which Messiah’s brethren live for, as the Children of Light:

“ ... unto you that fear my name shall ***the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his beams***; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal. 4:2).

In these words, we have our Messiah depicted, as the Sun of Righteousness. Interestingly, at the time when Peter and others “were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16) upon the mount of Transfiguration, it is said of the Master that “his face did shine as the Sun” (Mat. 17:2). Not like Moses’ face, which the people of Israel were afraid to look upon, and which had to be veiled from their sight until the reflected glory faded (see 2 Cor. 3). Rather, being a foretaste of the blessings of his Kingdom, the glory of Yahweh was seen shining through Him with unrivalled brilliance, like that of the Sun. He is the Sun of the political Heavens of the Coming Age – and his brethren will become like unto him, for it is testified that at that time: “then shall the righteous ***shine forth as the Sun*** in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mat. 13:43). Whereas the duty of the disciple is to hold forth the Word of Life in the earthen vessels of their mortal weakness; in the coming Kingdom, they shall shine brilliantly with immortal splendour, and, with their Redeemer, shall constitute the luminary orb pertaining to that Age. Such is the hope and desire of all the saints.

Psalm 19 also describes that time to come, and the preaching of the Gospel that will pertain to it:

“The heavens declare the glory of *El*, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their circuit is gone out throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for ***the Sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber***, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit to the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof” (Psa. 19:1-6).

Whilst these words are often supposed to be descriptive of the natural heavens and earth, there are a number of features which indicate that something more is intended. The heavens being described here speak words: “...uttereth speech ...” “there is no speech nor language ...”; and have a “voice”. Paul, writing under inspiration, applied this Psalm to the preaching of the Apostles in the First Century:

“ ... So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, ***their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world***” (Rom. 10:18).

The comparison being made here, is that just as the Sun illuminates all parts of the earth, the shining forth of the Gospel-Light extended to all peoples of the then “world”. There was “no speech or language” that formed a barrier to the spread of the Word, for at Pentecost it was given to the Apostles to speak in other tongues. Truly their teaching went unto the ends of the then known world, or as the Apostle expressed it: “to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:23).

Similarly, the Gospel shall be caused to shine forth in the Age to Come. So John describes:

“ ... I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the Gospel of the Age to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people ...” (Rev. 14:6).

Notice, the preaching messenger is said to “fly in the midst of heaven” – the place where the Sun is ordinarily seen. And the preaching, like that of the Apostles of old, will extend to all the earth, irrespective of any language barrier. The Gospel of the Age shall go out to all the earth via this mid-heaven proclamation of the Word.

This is what Psalm 19 is really speaking of: not merely the natural state of affairs, but more importantly, the spread of the Gospel in the Dawn of a New Age. It refers to what Malachi describes as being the Rising of the Sun of Righteousness who shall arise with healing in his beams. Speaking of the Sun as being like a “bridegroom” going forth from his wedding chamber, our minds are brought to the idea of a Marriage taking place. Clearly, this is a shift from the natural plane to the spiritual. Revelation chapter 19 describes the marriage between the Lamb of God, and those who are constituted his Bride. And again, associated with this idea, is that of Light, and having sufficient oil in our lamps to diffuse that Light to all around us. Our Master speaks of this, in his parable of the 10 virgins:

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (Mat. 25:1-4).

The parable is well known to us. Those who took no oil were not ready and waiting for the Bridegroom to come. They were found to be in darkness when he came – whereas those wise virgins who took oil in their vessels were taken in to the marriage “and the door was shut”. And the lessons are plain: if we wish to shine with immortal splendour in the coming New Age, we must show forth the light of the Word in the days of our mortal weakness. Bearing oil in our vessels, that is, the fuel of The Word, we must be ever shining with light, and longing for that time to come when every shadow and work of darkness shall be dispelled at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, whose warmth and glory shall be felt all over the earth.

Chris Maddocks

*“we are in a state of weakness and sin,
but keeping our eyes steadfastly fixed on the morning dawn
that has been so long held up in promise to human view,
we are enabled to persevere and work until the night comes,
when no man can work- a night that has come to all who have gone before us,
and may come to us, but which will quickly be ended by the bright rising of that Sun
of Righteousness, who will usher in the eternal day.”*

Brother Robert Roberts