

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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1 Ye worlds of light, that roll so near
The Saviour's throne of shining bliss,
O tell, how mean your glories are,
How faint and few, compar'd with his!

2 We sing the bright and morning Star,
Jesus, the spring or light and love:
See, how its rays, diffus'd from far,
Conduct us to the realms above!

3 Its cheering beams spread wide abroad,
Point out the puzzled Christian's way;
Still, as he goes, he finds the road
Enlighten'd with a constant day.

4 When shall we reach the heavenly place
Where this bright Star will brightest shine?
Leave far behind these scenes of night,
And view a luster so divine?

Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795)

The Visit of the Dayspring

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Luke 1:78-79

John the Baptist came "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God" (vv. 77-78a). The "tender mercy or bowels of mercy" is a way of expressing the matchless compassion of God through His Son. This is the mercy which is rooted in the heart of our great God. In mercy God restrains from us the just judgment we deserve. This brings us to consider three things: 1) the Divine incarnation (v. 78b), 2) the Divine illumination (v. 79a), and 3) the Divine instruction (v. 79b).

The Divine incarnation—“whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us” (v. 78b). This refers to the coming of Jesus into this world, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). This dayspring from on high is the dawning of a new heavenly day. “The dayspring from on high” is God’s way of expressing the coming of His Son and the office He will hold as Redeemer. Malachi called Him, “The Sun of righteousness” who shall arise “with healing in his wings” (Mal. 4:2). Isaiah said, “Thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee” (Isa. 60:1) and the “Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa. 60:3). Jesus called Himself “the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16). “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).

This dayspring from on high has “visited us” (v. 78). Oh, how great is the need for such a visitation. One verse that defines the incarnation well is “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Paul put it this way to Timothy, “Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). Christ came in the flesh (1 John 4:2), Christ was sent in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). Christ suffered in the flesh (1 Pet. 4:1). Christ died in the flesh (1 Pet. 3:18). Christ made reconciliation in the flesh (Col. 1:21-22). The importance God placed on the incarnation is seen in the following, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:2-3).

The Divine illumination—“To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (v. 79a). Isaiah noted, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isa. 9:2). Jesus who is the light and our light gives the light of instruction showing how we may have forgiveness. He gives the light of comfort to dispel fears, inspire hope, and institute joy. He gives the light of direction “to guide our feet in the way of peace.” Oh, to have the peace that passes understanding in our hearts and minds. Just to rest in peace. Our verse says He gives “light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.” Such a state of blackness is a terrible state of fear and hopelessness. It refers to a pining away with no prospects of help in sight. The shadow land is a state where sin and death rule and the world is its morgue. And one of the most famous passages in the Bible says, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4). Just think of the reverse of this for those who do not have the Lord with them as they pass through the valley of the

shadow of death. This is the sad state of individuals and nations that have the shadow of death cast over them for they do fear evil and face eternal damnation.

The Divine instruction—“To give light ... to guide our feet into the way of peace” (v. 78b). Not only does the dayspring visit us but He gives light in our darkness, and He guides our feet in the way of peace. The feet of these needed to be guided into a way they had not known. It was called “the way of peace.” Yes, they needed guidance. Why? “The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace” (Isa. 59:8). Isaiah describes the condition of things before the dayspring. Paul describes the natural state of man, “And the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17).

“The way of peace” is the end result of this guidance in the light. It has been said that this is objective and subjective peace. It is objectively a reconciliation with God through “the dayspring on high”—“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). It is subjectively the quiet and comforting assurance of forgiveness and adoption—“The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:16-17). “Peace is the smile of God reflected in the reconciled sinner’s heart, the shelter from the storm; the hiding place in the shadow of His wings, the stream that issues from the fountain of grace” [Hendriksen]. Even so Christ gave light to those who set in darkness and the shadow of death. Thank God the dayspring from on high has visited us (v. 78).