

When the Shadows Flee Away

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

The sermon 'When the Shadows Flee Away' by Arno Clemens Gaebelein explores the theme of Christ's return and the blessings that will follow, including the glorification of God's people, the blessing of Israel, and the righteousness of all nations.

Scripture: Romans 8:19

Topics: "Second Coming", "Redemption"

Description

Arno Clemens Gaebelein preaches about the long-awaited daybreak when the shadows of sin and death will flee away, bringing peace and glory to the earth as prophesied in the Bible. He emphasizes that this promised morning will only come when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to reign as King over the earth, bringing redemption and restoration to creation. Gaebelein highlights the significance of Christ's second coming in ending human suffering, establishing justice, and ushering in a new era of righteousness and peace for all nations.

Transcript

"Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense" (Sol. Song iv:6).

For nearly 6,000 years the shadows of sin and death and all which goes with it have been upon the human race. It has been a long and dreary night. Nor has that night become less as centuries passed by. Never before have the shadows of the night, the shadows of sin, been so dark and horrifying as now. Never before has there been so much sorrow, so much weeping and suffering in the earth as during our generation. That it will not be always so God's holy Word assures us. The night will end some day. "Watchman what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The morning cometh." What morning did the watchman mean? It is that morning which all the great prophets of God beheld in holy vision. The morning when the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Then that which has been shall be again and peace on earth as well as glory to God in the highest will follow.

How and when will that long-promised morning come? Not through man's efforts. Not even through the preaching of the Gospel or the activities of the church. Not through a progressive civilization or through great reforms. Many expect in our days a better time for this earth as the result of the great struggle of nations. One of the slogans has been; "We fight to make the earth a decent place to live in;" while others believe that after the war a perfect and permanent peace with world-wide brotherhood and prosperity will

solve all the problems of the human race. The complete overthrow of autocracy with its horrible crimes is in sight. Democracy will be victorious. Nations, we doubt not, will be brought together in a great league of nations, and all we have been fighting for as a nation to maintain justice and righteousness will be accomplished. But is this going to end sin? Will this mean that all the world turns now to God and to His Son? Will this victory end human suffering and wipe away all tears?

Will it bring back the lost paradise? Will famines and pestilences, earthquakes now be stopped? Will as a result of the victory of democracy groaning creation be delivered from its groans by the removal of the curse which has rested upon it so long? Has the perfect day come when all strife ceases forever and the sword can never again be unsheathed?

With all the achievements of our times and the realization of our human hopes the age is still "this present evil age," Satan is not yet dethroned, but he is still the ruler and the god of the age. The night is still on. The promised daybreak has not yet come when the shadows flee away. May God's people remember this now when a wave of optimism no doubt will soon sweep this world, when everywhere the message of "peace and safety" will be preached, when the rush for world betterment will become almost irresistible.

Not Till He Comes

Not till the Lord Jesus Christ comes again and is enthroned as King over this earth will that day break when the shadows flee away. He alone can bring that longed for better day for the earth. His is the power and the glory to do it. He came from heaven down into this night of sin to purchase back His alienated creation. He paid the price so wonderfully great which only God can rightly value. The crown of thorns He wore because the thorns are the emblems of the curse which rests now upon creation as the result of man's sin. He tasted death for everything. On the cross He accomplished the mighty work, procured salvation for believing sinners, sealed Satan's doom, and that work is furthermore the pledge and guarantee of the victory for God in bringing back creation to its former perfect condition, only with greater glory added.

The once thorn-crowned Christ is in glory yonder. There faith's eye sees Him, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor. But some day He will get the many crowns of which He is worthy, and when that glorious day comes, the shadows flee away.

"Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,

Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,

Thou who alone art worthy! It was thine

By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth;

And Thou hast made it thine by purchase since,

And overpaid its value with Thy blood."^[1]

Let us see then what shadows will flee away when He comes back to earth again and claims His blood-bought inheritance. Let us see what glories are in store for this earth when the Son of Man receives that kingdom which will extend from sea to sea unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

I. As to His Redeemed People. The breaking of the day is heralded by the Morningstar, followed by the rising of the Sun in all his glory. Thus nature teaches us Scripture truths. Christ comes first for His own Saints; that is the Morningstar. And then He comes in fullest glory with all His Saints as the sun of righteousness with healing in His wings; that is the sunrise when all shadows of the night will flee away.

The Saints of God wait now for the breaking of the day, for His coming as the Morningstar. And when He comes and opens with His triumphant shout the graves of the righteous dead, and calls the living Saints for the unspeakable change, in a moment, the twinkling of an eye, to put on immortality--then the shadows for His people are forever, yes forever, gone. No more bodies then of humiliation, but glorified bodies; no more separation from loved ones and from saints, but a blessed eternal reunion and fellowship; no more sorrow, but everlasting joy; no more crying and tears, but all tears wiped away; no more sinning, but perfect holiness; no more troubles, but perfect rest. What a glory time it will be when for us, His own beloved people the day breaks, and the shadows flee away. As shadows now increase, because the night is far spent and the day is at hand, the Saints of God should daily think of the soon coming day-break, that blessed, happy moment when we shall see Him as He is and shall be like Him.

II. The Shadows Will Flee Away from Israel and Israel's Land. No pen can describe the history of this people and the dark shadows which have been upon them. As the homeless nation they have wandered throughout this age, in fulfillment of the predictions of their own prophets, among the nations of the earth. Awful have been their persecutions, and tribulations upon tribulations have been their lot. Suffering and sorrow, the meat and drink of every generation since they were driven from their God-given land. How dark are the shadows which have come upon that people once more as the result of the world conflict. Millions have lost their all. Hundreds of thousands are homeless wanderers in eastern Europe. Perhaps the story of their suffering in connection with the war will never be written. And the end is not yet.

On the other hand their national hope has been revived as never before in their history. Regiments of Jews have gone forth into the war with their own flags, with David's shield in the center and the Hebrew word "Immanuel." They have been fighting like the Maccabees of old. Jerusalem has been captured from the Turks; all Palestine has passed into the hands of the Allies; never again can Turkey have dominion over the land she has so horribly misruled. What is to become of Palestine and Jerusalem? Let the answer be given through the letter which A. J. Balfour wrote in behalf of the British Government to Baron Rothschild: "The Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing will be done that may prejudice the civil or religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." Here is the answer of the French Government. "M. Sokolow, representing the Zionist organizations, was received by Monsieur Pichon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was happy to inform him that there is complete agreement between the French and English Governments in all matters which concern the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine." Our own country has fallen in line and pledged itself to see that at last the Jew is going to be treated with justice and that Palestine will become an independent Jewish state. No wonder there is great joy among the masses of Jews and that they too see a better day looming up for their people.

But do these tremendous events in the East mean that the day has come when the shadows flee away from the seed of Abraham? Not by any means. The time of Jacob's trouble has not yet been. The last siege of Jerusalem, prewritten in Zechariah's prophecy (chapter xiv) still awaits its fulfillment. To deliver that nation and that land completely and bring about the glories promised in God's infallible Word needs more than the conquest of the land. The flag of the British lion now flies over Jerusalem. Some day

another flag will be raised above that city--the flag of the Son of Man, the Son of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Only when He comes again and His blessed feet stand once more upon the Mount of Olives, will that day of blessing and glory break for Israel with all shadows fleeing away. What it all will mean is fully written in prophecy. Much of what is written in the Book of Isaiah from chapter xl to the end of the vision of Isaiah refers to that glory time, when the King comes back, and when for Jerusalem the shadows flee away. Read especially chapters liv and lv; lxvi. In the other Prophets read the following chapters: Jeremiah xxx and xxxi; Ezekiel xxxiv-xlvi; Daniel vii:13-28 and chapter xii; Hosea iii:5, v:15, vi:1-3, xiv; Joel iii; Amos ix:11-15; Obadiah, verses 17-21; Micah iv-v; Habakkuk iii; Zephaniah iii:8-20; Haggai ii:6-9; Zechariah ii:6-13, viii, ix:9-11, xii-xiv. Here we have unfailing predictions of what will be when the day breaks and the shadows flee away from Israel.

III. The Shadows for All the Nations of the World Will Flee Away. In Revelation xx:3 we read that Satan, the Devil, that old Serpent is the deceiver of the nations. As we have seen in the lecture on the history of Satan he is the murder and liar from the beginning. He is responsible for every war which has ever been fought; he is the author of all idolatry; he blinds the nations and keeps them away from knowing God. For this reason peace cannot come till this dark shadow is chained, the world cannot be brought to God and do righteousness till this arch-deceiver is robbed of his power. We can rest assured that as long as this being is loose, world conversion and universal peace are unobtainable. And he will be chained by Him who is the strong One and has conquered him already--our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore when He comes again the shadows will flee away from the nations of the earth. China will no longer be domineered over by demon influences; India, Africa and the islands of the sea will cast their idols away. All swords will become plowshares, all spears pruning hooks. Wars will cease even unto the ends of the earth; nations will learn war no more. The nations will learn righteousness; all oppression will cease; capital and labor has ended its strife; poverty is unknown; wickedness and crime of every description ends, for the King reigns in righteousness, and "in His day shall the righteous flourish and abundance of peace.... He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth.... all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him" (Psalm lxxii). Under His gracious reign of power famines and pestilences can no longer devastate this earth. Sickness and diseases will be banished and those who obey the laws of His kingdom will continue to live on earth, so that death, the common thing now, as the wages of sin, will become uncommon during the coming age. What a glory time there is in store for this earth! But we must not forget that day, when the shadows flee away, will be ushered in by a judgment of nations. Nations now in existence, steeped in unspeakable wickedness, having cast even a skin-deep civilization to the winds and outraged the laws of God and man, will be dealt with in judgment and pass away as nations (Matthew xxv:31).

IV. The Shadows which are upon Creation Will Also Flee Away. The Apostle Paul tells us of creation's curse, creation's groans and creation's deliverance: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans viii:19-22). Creation has fallen under the curse through man's sin. As man has continued in sin and has become worse in his deeds of defiance of God, creation has also seen degradation in a like degree. Blights are seen everywhere. Tidal waves and terrific earthquakes have destroyed human lives by the millions. All creation is suffering and groaning

under the curse. But it is not to be so forever. The King who comes back is also the Creator, He who called all things into existence out of nothing. He surely will set all things in order and deliver groaning creation. He will put all things back as they were in the beginning and then earth will be once more a paradise. If He would do anything less than that the dark shadow of the one who brought sin and death into the world would have the last word, and could then sneer into the face of God the fact that in spite of the redemption price He could not restore things as they were in the beginning.

We quote but one passage from the Book of Isaiah in which this blessed time is predicted when the shadows flee away for a groaning creation: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play at the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den" (Isaiah xi:6-8). Do not say this has a spiritual meaning. It has not; it means what it says, and when the King comes back He will do it all in His mighty power.

"O scenes surpassing fables, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplish'd bliss! which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy?
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty; the reproach
Of barrenness is gone. The fruitful field
Laughs with abundance; and the land, once lean,
Or fertile only in its own disgrace,
Exults to see its thistly curse repeal'd;
The various seasons woven into one,
And that one season an eternal spring.
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,
For there is none to covet, all are full.
The lion, and the leopard and the bear
Graze with the fearless flocks; all bask at noon
Together, or all gambol in the shade
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.
Apathies are none. No foe to man

Lurks in the serpent now; the mother sees
And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand
Stretch'd forth to dally with the crested worm,
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
All creatures worship man, and all mankind
One Lord, one Father. Error has no place;
That creeping pestilence is driven away;
The breath of heaven has chased it. In the heart
No passion touches a discordant string,
But all is harmony and love. Disease
Is not; the pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.
One song employs all nations; and all cry
'Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us!'"[2]

"Until the day break and the shadows flee away I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense." The mountain of myrrh must mean the cross for myrrh means "bitterness" and was used in embalming the dead. As long as He tarries let God's people tent by His Cross and feast on His great love. And frankincense has the meaning of worship and praise. Let us worship and praise Him--"until the day break and the shadows flee away."

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