



AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. (Matt 17:1-2)

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. (Isaiah 9:2)

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 Peter 1:19)

I chose this hymn as much for its artful composition and beauty of expression as for its direct appeal for the season of Epiphany. The word pictures flow as a peaceful river through pastures of contentment. One can almost see and feel the beauty of a celestial sunrise that shall mark the final day in the annals of this world. The heart-wrenching fevers and suffering of the world have been borne in misery, but also in hope of a future Promise – and the consummation of that future Promise is illustrated wonderfully in the lines of this old Presbyterian classic hymn.

Lyrics for this hymn are the composition of Thomas Hastings in 1831; and the tune, *Wesley*, was the work of Lowell Mason in 1830.

Hail to the Brightness of Zion's Glad Morning

Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning!
Joy to the lands that in darkness have lain!
Hushed be the accents of sorrow and mourning;
Zion in triumph begins her mild reign.

Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning!
Long by the prophets of Israel foretold!
Hail to the millions from bondage returning!
Gentiles and Jews the blest vision behold.

Lo, in the desert rich flowers are springing,
Streams ever copious are gliding along;
Loud from the mountain tops echoes are ringing,
Wastes rise in verdure, and mingle in song.

See, from all lands, from the isles of the ocean,
Praise to the Savior ascending on high;
Fallen the engines of war and commotion;
Shouts of salvation are rending the sky.

Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning! Joy to the lands that in darkness have lain! Hushed be the accents of sorrow and mourning; Zion in triumph begins her mild reign. Are you one of those incorrigible sleepy-heads who are difficult to rouse from bed at the breaking of day? Never mind! There is coming a Day Break whose brilliant beams and effulgent light you will not be able to block out even with closed eyes. *30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* (Matt 24:30-31) Why do you suppose Matthew makes reference to the Trumpet? It is because that was the custom of the Bridegroomsmen in sounding a trumpet when the Bridegroom (Jesus Christ) approached the house of His betrothed Bride (the Church). The dawning of this Day of the Lord will be unlike the dawning of any other day for glory, for beauty, for joy, and for span; for this Day shall begin and never end. The light shall illumine the dark mountains of North Korea where manmade lights are not visible at night; the jungle regions of Africa, and all of the islands of the sea. God has His elect in all of these quarters, and He knows who, and where, they sleep. The only human utterances will be of joy muffled by awe. Sorrow and mourning shall become a distant memory. Finally, truly upright and righteous reign shall be established in the earth. The brightness of Christ's person, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, will no longer blind our eyes when we are changed into a glorious body with Him.

Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning! Long by the prophets of Israel foretold! Hail to the millions from bondage returning! Gentiles and Jews the blest vision behold. In case you may forget, the first line of the first verse is repeated in the second. Our Lord Jesus Christ was present in the primordial darkness of Creation. He was the Executive Agent of Creation – *1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

Genesis 1:1 *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word (Jesus Christ) was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* (John 1:1-3) From the first verse in Genesis to the last in Revelations, this is the Word that personifies our Lord Jesus Christ – all of the historical books of the Bible, all of the poetic books, all of the prophets, all of the Gospels, epistles and prophecies are of Christ! There will be no border or boundary separating nations, tribes, or tongues in that Day. Sin is a deadly bondage; but mortal life itself is bondage to the soul that yearns for its Maker. Lying in wait from the desert dunes of the Sahara, the rocky mountains of Persia, the plains and river valleys of Asia, the frozen prairies of the north and south, and in every patch of ground of this primitive planet, the souls of God's Elect shall arise from their dusty deposits and rise up with those Elect yet living to see and meet their dear Savior.

Lo, in the desert rich flowers are springing, Streams ever copious are gliding along; Loud from the mountain tops echoes are ringing, Wastes rise in verdure, and mingle in song. The most beautiful foliage of all of the world is found in desert regions where virgin soil has lain dormant for extended periods of time. Suddenly, a refreshing rain graces the waste places and the desert blooms in a grand abundance of beauty and joy. In flying over the deserts of old Persia, I was astonished at the carpet of elegant colors that graced the desert sands after a rare rainfall. The world today is all a desert – a desert and a wilderness of sin. But the day comes when the rains of the Lord shall replenish the earth with a righteous downpour. The desert places will bloom again. The thousands of martyred souls in the deserts of Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and every other imaginable Hell Hole shall arise in full bloom of beauty to meet their Lord. There will also be a resurrection of those wicked who beheaded them whose rising will be to a different kind of eternity altogether – eternal suffering and darkness. And . . . there

will be music the likes of which no Bach or Beethoven could have conceived. The gifted and gilded choir of angels shall sound forth in chorus whose beauty shall lift the souls of the righteous to high Heaven.

See, from all lands, from the isles of the ocean, Praise to the Savior ascending on high; Fallen the engines of war and commotion; Shouts of salvation are rending the sky. The most glorious and beautiful chorus I have ever heard was on the Island of Isabel of the Solomon Island Chain. The deep rich voices of the male members seated on the left, echoed by the harmonious and shrill voices of the ladies, and enriched by the pipe organs of bamboo, made one's soul lift from its mortal anchorage and drift toward the very Gates of Heaven. God hears those wonderful voices, and they praise and glorify His Name. *14 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea. 15 Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.* (Isaiah 24:14-15) It is no secret either many of our martyrs – even Anglican martyrs – glorified the name of the Lord even from the fires of martyrdom. John Hus, a Czech priest of pre-Reformation died in the fires singing a Psalm of Praise. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was burned at the stake holding his right hand into the fire for having made a false recantation previously. Bishop Hugh Latimer encouraged his fearful friend, Nicolas Ridley, with these words just before the two were tied to the stake to be burned outside Oxford: *Be of good cheer, master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle in England, as I hope, by God's grace, shall never be put out.*

There will no longer be raised shouts of vengeance on the part of the martyred souls for their joys will overtake lesser causes. *Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord!* War, pestilence, and disease will be the former things; and every tear will be wiped from the eyes of those faithful of God.

Will you and your loved ones be of the blessed few who shall *hail the brightness of Zion's glad morning?*