



**T**HE burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? <sup>12</sup> The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. (Isaiah 21:11-12)

This hymn is one for all seasons, but more particularly one which blesses us at the Christmas Season of Lights and Love. The lyrics are the composition of John Bowring in 1825, and the musical score is by that great writer of music, Lowell Mason.

An accomplished and renowned author of classical hymns of the present day, Richard Adams, describes this hymn in the following words:

*This hymn evokes a vivid childhood memory.. Two men with deep, sonorous voices sang this song at the Christmas Eve midnight service each year for as long as I can remember. The church was dark, the watchman's solitary lantern giving the only light in a hushed sanctuary. The watchman stood at the altar, and the traveler slowly made his way down the aisle, as the two sang the question-reply verses to each other. It was hard to miss the symbolism of the lonely traveler making his way to the One who sheds light on a dark world. Richard Adams, a writer of a great number of classical hymns for our day.*

### **Watchman, Tell Us of the Night**

Watchman, tell us of the night,  
What its signs of promise are.  
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height,  
See that glory beaming star.  
Watchman, does its beauteous ray  
Aught of joy or hope foretell?  
Traveler, yes—it brings the day,  
Promised day of Israel.

Watchman, tell us of the night;  
Higher yet that star ascends.  
Traveler, blessedness and light,  
Peace and truth its course portends.  
Watchman, will its beams alone  
Gild the spot that gave them birth?  
Traveler, ages are its own;  
See, it bursts o'er all the earth.

Watchman, tell us of the night,  
For the morning seems to dawn.  
Traveler, darkness takes its flight,  
Doubt and terror are withdrawn.  
Watchman, let thy wanderings cease;  
Hie thee to thy quiet home.  
Traveler, lo! the Prince of Peace,  
Lo! the Son of God is come!

*Watchman, tell us of the night, What its signs of promise are. Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height, See that glory beaming star. Watchman, does its beauteous ray Aught of joy or hope foretell? Traveler, yes — it brings the day, Promised day of Israel.* The long night of silence for Israel lasted 400 years from the utterance of the last Old Testament prophet (Malachi) to the birth of the Sun of Righteousness who is the Light of the World. Such an endurance of darkness makes the appearing of Light even more glorious and stark. Men need reassurance of the coming light when darkness has prevailed too long. Our own nation has entered a period of self-induced darkness which needs a revealing Light to show us the way from our demise. As mentioned in the introductory text from Isaiah, this time of wonder and anxiety comes when night has persisted – even from 'Seir' (land of Assyria/Babylon.) The fall of Babylon (in its ancient context) heralded the fall of her drunken king (Balshazzar), but also the release of the Children of Bondage back to Jerusalem. Just as the Hebrews suffered the long Babylonian night of captivity, we in America suffer from corrupt and immoral politics of men and women whom we have given the scepter of authority. It is far more difficult to wrest that authority back, once given. But let us pray that the Spirit of God will once again "move upon the face of the waters" of America's soul and bring the gleaming eastern Light back to our decadent shores.

*"Watchman, tell us of the night; Higher yet that star ascends. Traveler, blessedness and light, Peace and truth its course portends. Watchman, will its beams alone Gild the spot that gave them birth? Traveler, ages are its own; See, it bursts o'er all the earth."* That ancient Star was observed by the corrupt prophet, Balaam, in the great wilderness: "He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: 17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: **THERE SHALL COME A STAR OUT OF JACOB**, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." (Num 24:16-17) Darkness and deceit cannot abide the Light. It flees helplessly from the Light, just as a snail flees the coming sunrise. (Psalm 58:8) Is it not obvious that the Washington swamp fears any light dispersed from above? We need not bear inordinate fear of that which shall come upon this nation and, indeed, the whole world lest we turn from our self-destructive ways for we have read the end of the story in Revelations. We abide in faith and righteousness awaiting the promise of God: "19 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)

*“Watchman, tell us of the night, For the morning seems to dawn. Traveler, darkness takes its flight, Doubt and terror are withdrawn. Watchman, let thy wanderings cease; Hie thee to thy quiet home. Traveler, lo! the Prince of Peace, Lo! the Son of God is come!”* Have we borne the long night of the soul in tears and mourning? Though we have angered the Sovereign Power on High, *“His anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”* (Psalm 30:5) When the lion and the tiger walk the long night through, the day comes when all is revealed and fear is vanquished. Such a Light as the world has never seen will soon dawn, and the wicked will be gathered by the angels and cast into the fire. Then, there can be no more darkness for ALL is Light!

Read the words of that great Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, regarding this subject:

*God’s prophets and ministers are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all is safe. As watchmen in the camp in time of war, to warn of the motions of the enemy. After a long sleep in sin and security, it is time to rise, to awake out of sleep. We have a great deal of work to do, a long journey to go; it is time to be stirring. After a long dark night is there any hope of the day dawning? What tidings of the night? What happens to-night? We must never be secure. But many make curious inquiries of the watchmen. They would willingly have nice questions solved, or difficult prophecies interpreted; but they do not seek into the state of their own souls, about the way of salvation, and the path of duty. The watchman answers by way of prophecy. There comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity; but afterward comes a night of trouble and calamity. If there be a morning of youth and health, there will come a night of sickness and old age; if a morning of prosperity in the family, in the public, yet we must look for changes. It is our wisdom to improve the present morning, in preparation for the night that is coming after it. Inquire, return, come.. We are urged to do it quickly, for there is no time to trifle. Those that return and come to God, will find they have a great deal of work to do, and but little time to do it in.*

—Matthew Henry Concise