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### GOD MAKING BARE HIS ARM IN REVIVAL POWER - the need of the hour

"The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," Isaiah 52:10.

*The synopsis of a sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, Lord's Day morning, 1st December 1991, by Rev Ivan Foster.*

This strong metaphor or symbolic phrase is used to denote God rising up to the aid of His people. The prophecy primarily refers to that day when the Lord will arise to recover and restore Israel to His favour and the enjoying again of His mercy and salvation. The opening verses of the chapter clearly indicate that.

"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem," verses 1-9.

Such a view of the meaning of these words of the prophet cannot be gainsaid EXCEPT by altering entirely the simple, plain, straightforward meaning of the words God employs and rendering God's use of words as meaningless! We do not need to consult some man-made 'code book' in order to decipher God's Word! What these words meant to those to whom they were first preached by Isaiah is what they still mean today. The Lord was speaking of Israel and Jerusalem and Zion and how arrogant and high-handed it is of any man to stand up and contradict the Lord and tell His people that He was not speaking of Israel and Jerusalem and Zion but the church and the Gentile believers of this age! This notion entertained by so many today is to me reminiscent of Peter's foolish attitude when he sought to correct the Saviour: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," Matthew 16:21-23.

The Saviour's severe rebuke of Peter ought to curb any impulse on our part to contradict the Lord and seek to place our own alternative meaning on His plain words.

Of course, there are a number of spiritual APPLICATIONS for the words of our text. One of them is that of using the text as an illustration of the moving of God in revival power amongst His people.

#### **Spiritual Awakening**

A great spiritual awakening will be the result of God's arm being made bare. In the previous chapter, verse 9, the people of God are awakened to pray. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" Again, the primary meaning of the words is a depicting of Israel stirred to cry unto the Lord for His help just prior to His return in power and glory to the Mount of Olives, to deliver His ancient people. It is a repeat of



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what happened back in the days just prior to the Exodus. "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob," Exodus 2:23-24. So it will be again at the end of this age.

But, as we have said, there is a picture here of God intervening on behalf of His people in this age, in response to their cries for Him to revive His Church. The people of God will be heard when they call on God to awaken to their aid. Again, this is illustrated for us in Mark 4:38. "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

The call of Israel to God for His help and intervention is followed by the command of God to His ancient people to awaken. "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out," Isaiah 51:17. We may use these words to illustrate how the Lord addresses the Church and calls upon her to awaken. This call is repeated in 52:1. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean," Isaiah 52:1.

I must emphasise again that these words are to be seen as being addressed to national Israel at a future date as is seen in the words "O Zion" and "O Jerusalem". However, I wish to use that future event as a means of illustrating how God revives His Church in these days from backsliding and bondage.

This process of stirring is the result of God moving by His power upon and amongst His people, God making bare His holy arm.

### **THIS IS THE ACT OF A WARRIOR.**

It is the tossing back of the garments to leave the arm free to move in battle. We commonly use the phrase "rolling up our sleeves" to indicate a preparation for engaging seriously in some manual labour. This is the military equivalent.

**1. There is war between God and sinful men.** When the Lord intervenes on behalf of His people He goes to war against those who are oppressing them.

Sin is rebellion, a warring against God. How often we see the Saviour described as a military commander, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS," Revelation 19:11-16. In similar mode, the Christian is described as a soldier. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," 2 Timothy 2:3, and the Church as an army. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" Song of Solomon 6:10.

**2. There are occasions when the war goes against the people of God.** Retreat and defeat are seen all about. These reversals are caused by our compromising, our sympathising with the enemy and not for any want of power on God's part. Disobedience to God's commands is the cause of the defeat. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years," Judges 6:1.

**3. It is then that revival is called for.** In the opening verses of the chapter 52, the people of God are depicted as defeated and captured. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful gar-



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ments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money."

It is in such circumstances that God intervenes, arises and makes bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations.

### MAKING BARE HIS ARM MEANS A DISPLAYING OF CHRIST

**1. Christ is the 'arm of the Lord'.** "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Isaiah 53:1-2. The 'He' referred to is the Saviour. In Him is the power of God to save His people and deliver them from their enemies displayed. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Corinthians 1:23-24.

**2. Making 'bare His arm' is to uncover, unveil Christ.** Man's nature is such that he cannot see the Saviour. This truth is declared in the opening verses of John's gospel. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not," John 1:10-11. The blindness of the human heart to Christ is seen in the aftermath of Paul's time of witnessing to the Jewish leaders in Rome. "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it," Acts 28:24-28.

**3. The work of revealing Christ is wrought through the preaching of the Gospel with the help of the Holy Ghost.** "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood," Galatians 1:15-16. The blindness of the Ethiopian was taken away as Philip preached Christ to him in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Acts 8:35-37.

### THE BLESSED RESULTS OF REVIVAL

**1. The stirring of the Church takes place.** It is a spiritual resurrection as is depicted in the words at the beginning of Isaiah 52. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion," Isaiah 52:1-2. Weakness gives way to strength. This will be the experience of Israel in the latter days and it is the spiritual experience of the people of God whenever God is pleased to move in revival blessing. Here is the explanation for the glorious events in the days of Whitefield and Wesley and again in 1859 here in our land. It is also what underlies lesser movings of the Holy Spirit which have been the joy of many in Ulster back in the 1960s and 70s.

**2. The beauty of Christ is seen amongst His people.** Where once there was dust and earthliness the



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beautiful garments of salvation are seen. "Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion," verse 2. The glorious change wrought in a time of revival blessing is also depicted for us in Isaiah 61:3. "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

How beautiful is the church in a day of revival! It is a foreshadowing of that great day of His return in power and glory. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Colossians 3:4. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Philippians 3:20-21.

**3. It is a holy work.** This is a work by God's HOLY arm. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean." Isaiah 52:1. Holiness once again adorns the people of God. "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD," verse 11.

**4. There is a setting free.** The yoke is lifted and the dominating power of sin is broken. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Micah 7:18-19.

**5. It is a work of joy and comfort.** "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem," Isaiah 52:9. The history of revival is one of joyfulness and singing. We still delight in the hymns written in the times of blessing in the 18th century from writers such as Charles Wesley.

**6. It is a work seen by near and far.** All the ends of the earth shall see and experience God's salvation that is here referred to. "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." This shall literally be fulfilled when the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion at His coming again. In days of revival what the Lord does is no secret thing. All shall take note of it. This is spoken of in Psalm 26:1-3, "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Even the heathen takes note of the moving of God amongst His people. Rahab the harlot was able to speak of the knowledge of the Lord's doings amongst the nations some forty years after the Exodus. "And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath," Joshua 2:9-11. There are times it would appear that the heathen have a longer memory of God's mighty deeds than do the people of God!!

As I said at the start of this article, it begins with a stirring in the place of prayer. Christian, it is there we must seek and wait for revival.

***"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us," Psalm 123:2.***