

# The Morning Breaketh

by J. Wilbur Chapman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and trust in God's promises, even in the midst of darkness and despair, and encourages listeners to seek a deeper understanding of the Bible and to pray fervently.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:15, Exodus 12:13, Psalm 30:5, Isaiah 21:11, Romans 8:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:5, James 5:16, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 4:3, Revelation 21:4

**Topics:** "Hope And Redemption", "Faith And Prayer"

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## Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the contrasting themes of night and morning in the Bible, emphasizing how God always sends messengers of hope even in the darkest times. The Prophet Isaiah, broken-hearted over the sin of the people, experiences a vision of hope amidst despair. The sermon delves into the existence of sin, the need for preaching about sin, the presence of sorrow, and the mysteries of life, all pointing to the transition from night to morning. Chapman urges believers to seize the present opportunity for action and emphasizes the brighter days ahead for Bible study and prayer, highlighting the importance of deepening faith and commitment to prayer.

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## Transcript

TEXT: "Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night."--Isaiah 21:11-12.

It is very interesting to note that, whether we study the Old Testament or the New, nights are always associated with God's mornings. In other words, he does not leave us in despair without sending to us his messengers of hope and cheer.

The Prophet Isaiah in this particular part of his prophecy seems to be almost broken-hearted because of the sin of the people. As one of the Scotch preachers has put it, he has practically sobbed himself to sleep. A great shadow has fallen upon the people of God and he is in despair because of it. They have sown to the wind and now they are reaping the whirlwind, a result which is inevitable. They are away from Zion with its temple, and are deprived of the view of those mountains which are round about Jerusalem and to this day are clad with vines and olive trees. They are in captivity and are the abject slaves of the enemies of God. Isaiah's heart is well-nigh crushed, but in the midst of the despair he has a vision of the chariots coming and hears a cry which rejoices his soul, "Babylon is fallen." It is because of these tidings that he cries out in the words of the text.

What a night they had had of it! They had been in darkness that was ever increasing, and the song of thanksgiving which used to fill their souls because of the nearness of Jehovah had entirely departed from them.

The figure of the watchman is often used in the Bible, as for example when he stands upon the city walls and is told that if he sounds the trumpet telling of the approach of the enemy and the people hear and do not take warning their blood is upon their own heads, while if he fails to sound the trumpet and the people are cut off, their blood is required at the watchman's hand. And again in the first chapter of Zechariah the eighth to the eleventh verses, "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled and white. Then said I, O my Lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold all the earth sitteth still and is at rest." For here the man standing in the midst of the myrtle trees is him of whom the prophets did speak, while the messengers are those who bring him tidings of the progress of his kingdom. But again where David comes to the watch tower and sees the two messengers running, the second one bringing him tidings of the death of his son, and from this watch tower he staggers back again to his room crying out, "O Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee!"

The poet usually sings of the night as a time of beauty. He sings of the moon and the stars; but in the Bible night always stands for that which is dark, foul, loathsome, sinful, cold and deadly. There are different nights mentioned in the Scripture, for the most part in the Old Testament. There was that night in Eden when sin blinded the eyes of Adam and Eve and a great darkness fell round about them. There was the night of the flood, all because the people had neglected God; and there was the night of the destroying angel passing over the cities of Egypt, all because of the indifference of those who knew not God. But even in these nights God does not leave his people without help, for in Eden we read, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; while in the flood behold the Ark; and in the Passover night we see the blood of the Paschal lamb sprinkled upon the lintels of the door.

There are different mornings mentioned in the Scriptures, and as a rule we find them in the New Testament.

The morning of his birth.

The morning of his resurrection.

The morning of his miracle when the empty nets are filled and the discouraged fishermen are made to rejoice.

The morning of his return, when, after the rising of the morning star, an endless day of blessing shall be ushered in.

It used to be the custom in Scotland, especially in Aberdeen, for the night watchman of the city guard as he paced the streets to cry aloud, "Twelve o'clock and the night is dark; one o'clock and the storm is heavy," and the restless sleeper would toss upon his pillow and listen for the tidings of the morning hour, "Two o'clock and the morning is starry." It is in this spirit that we listen to-day to the cry of the watchman when he declares, "The morning cometh and also the night."

I

We are in a sense in the night in these days, even though we are Christians.

First: Because of the existence of sin. It is everywhere, in the heart as a mighty principle of evil pulling us down as the law of gravitation pulls material substances toward the earth's center. In the life as shown by our habits and practices, for these are the fruits of sin. In the very air we breathe sin is manifest, and sin has brought the night.

Second: I sometimes think that the darkness is increasing because as ministers we fail to preach concerning sin. We speak of it as an error or a mistake; we talk about the devil and call him his Satanic majesty; we preach about hell and call it the lost world, while it is true that in the olden days when men trembled under the word of the preacher the man of God spoke of the devil and hell and sin in all their awfulness. But the morning cometh, for while it is true that sin is in the world and it has gripped many of us, yet because of Christ's death upon the cross we are free from the penalty of sin; we may be free from the power of sin, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and death; we may be free from the practice of sin, for Christ is the secret of our deliverance. But the text tells us that while the morning cometh the night also appears. And so for those of us whose lives have been such a struggle we cry, "Is there no deliverance?" and I answer, yes, we shall one day be free from the presence of sin; and that will be at his return when we shall see him and be like him, and the new day which is never to close shall be upon us.

Third: We are in the night because of the existence of sorrow. Next to sin this is the greatest fact in the world, for men are born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. And somehow the morning and the night as they are fastened together in this text present to us the story of our lives, for we are first in the morning when everything seems peaceful, and almost immediately in the night when we are really in despair.

I journeyed from Naples to Rome over a fine piece of railway and found myself now in the darkness of a tunnel and almost immediately rushing out onto a fertile plain. That railroad is the story of many a life. But "Is there no deliverance that is complete?" and I answer, yes, there is a time coming when there shall be no sea and no tears and no night, for the former things are passed away.

Fourth: We are in the night because of mystery. Life is full of questions. "Why must I have this trial or pain or trouble?" So many of us are asking these questions, and there is really no answer, at least none for the present. And yet God has not deceived us, for he has said, "What I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter." He tells us that when we see him we shall know, but also declares that no one can see his face and live; and then, said the sainted Augustine, "Let me die that I may see him." It is true that we shall go on from light into darkness, from morning into the night, but is there no final deliverance? And I answer, yes, when we see him and become like him we shall know as we are known. Let us wait and believe until that day.

Have you ever seen a perfect rainbow--that is, a rainbow in a perfect circle? I never have. The most perfect one I have ever seen was on the plains of Jericho, but it was a half circle. However, in the Revelation we are told that in that day there shall be a rainbow round about the throne, when half circles shall be made whole and half things shall be made complete; that is the morning for which we long.

II

But there is another suggestion, "the morning cometh and also the night." There is the thought of the transition from the one to the other. We certainly have been in the night so far as our living is concerned and our working, but now I feel sure there is coming a change and we are living in a critical time. May God help us to be faithful.

All truth is like a cycle and at different points in the circumference there are truths which must be especially emphasized.

The late A. J. Gordon once preached a sermon on the "Recurrence of Doctrine," in which he stated that while in one day justification by faith was the prominent truth for the church, in another sanctification was prominent, in still another the return of the Lord, and in still another the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. All this I firmly believe and it only proves to me that the prominent truth for to-day is every man for his neighbor, every friend for his friend, every parent for his child, the individual seeking the individual for Christ. God is calling us to action; let us not fail.

I have a friend who used to use an illustration of a sea captain, his first mate and his wife wrecked upon a rocky shore, huddled together upon a rock out from the shore but too far for them to escape by throwing themselves into the waves. The life-line is shot out to them and the captain puts it round his first mate and bids him jump and he is drawn to the shore in safety. Then he put the cord around the waist of his wife, but the current is running in such a way that she must spring at just the proper second or she will be thrown back against the rocks and be killed. And he shouts to her, "Spring!" but she waited to kiss him and waited too long, sprang into the sea and was thrown back against the rock and drawn shoreward lifeless. Whether that story is true or not I cannot say, but it is an illustration of the present day to me. God is saying, "Now is the day of opportunity." May he pity us if we fail!

III

While all that has been said is true concerning the morning of the Eternal Day, in another sense it is true that already a brighter day is breaking.

First: A better day for Bible study. This old Book which people have feared was going to pass away is better to-day than ever. It is the object of deeper affection, and there is no question but that more people are believing in it to-day as the inspired Word of God than for years; and all because they have tested it and it has stood the test.

Second: A better day of prayer is dawning. Fifty thousand people in Great Britain are banded together to pray and to pray until the blessing comes if that be for years. Oh, that God would teach us to pray! We do not half understand what it means to ask God for blessings.

A story of prayer which would seem impossible if I did not know it to be true, for I have friends who have been in the town where it occurred and have met the descendants of the old sea captain, is the story of the captain who took his boy and others to fish and in the midst of the hurricane the boy was washed over board. Broken-hearted, he returned to the shore and the fisher wife, as was her custom, came down to meet them, only to sob her way back to her home because her boy was gone. They spent the night in the kirk in prayer, when the minister said, "Why not ask God to restore his body?" and they did. They put out to sea and journeyed sixty miles until he told them to stop and when they let over the grappling hooks they knew by the very tug of the rope that they had his body. They bore it back again to the broken-hearted captain and his wife, who had all the time been waiting in the kirk in prayer. May God teach us how to

pray!

A brighter day is dawning, and while it may be that some of us cannot see it, while there may be skeptics who say it is not exactly true, yet I know from what I have seen myself that the darkness is passing away.

In June, 1897, the steamer Catalonia at ten o'clock at night was found to be on fire. One of my friends has told me that he paced the deck and considered himself lost because the flames were burning fiercely. Finally the fire was under control and the people sang, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Telling me of the lessons that he learned on this awful journey, he said: "That night at twelve o'clock, when the pumps were being forced and the clouds of smoke were taking on new dimensions and we were wondering what the morning would bring us, the man on the bridge shouted, as he had at each midnight of the trip, 'Eight bells, all's well!'" Had the man down in a stateroom watching by the side of his sick wife heard the words, he might have said, "It's a falsehood," but that man's vision was restricted by the narrow walls of his stateroom. Had the mother and daughter, sitting in the cabin, with their arms about each other, wondering why they had been allowed to sail on the Catalonia and leave their loved ones behind, heard it, they might have said, "The man is beside himself," but they could not see beyond the cabin. Had the lonely traveler who stood near the hatchway given it a thought he might have said, "It's a lie," but he could not see through the clouds of smoke at which he stared silently. But the vision of the watch swept the horizon, and there was no obstruction in the ship's path. He knew that each revolution of the Catalonia's machinery pushed the ship on her way to Queenstown. He had a right to say it.

I somehow seem to hear the sound of the goings in the tops of the trees and have evidence that God is coming to his church with blessing. It is true there is in some quarters indifference, in many places worldliness, but I can see no insurmountable barrier in the way of the progress of the Kingdom of God.

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