

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE CLOUD OF DOVES.

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## A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 2ND, 1902.

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*On Lord's-day Evening, October 12th, 1879.*

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“Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”—Isaiah lx. 8.

WE believe that, in the latter days, according to the Word of God, men will flock to Christ, and to his Church, in far greater numbers than they have hitherto done. At present, we have to go to them; but, by-and-by, they will come to us. Now, we have to search them out, like lost sheep in a cloudy and dark day; but, in those days, they will feel a gracious drawing towards their God, and his Church, and they will come in vast multitudes to worship with the people of God;—yea, they will themselves become the people of God, and bow down before the feet of Emmanuel, the Prince of peace. Why should it not be? Why should we not expect it, and why should not the expectation greatly encourage us in labouring on through these weary years, being well assured that they that sow in tears shall one day reap in joy?

Yet, even at that time when, through the full preaching of the gospel, and the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, men shall come flocking to Christ in troops, even in that hour the Church will be astonished at the result. She will lift up her hands, and say, “Who hath begotten me these?” She will cry, in the words of our text, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” For, alas! God's people are often very unbelieving. We have seen something of this spirit even in our own time. There are certain good old Christian people who, if they see a convert added to the church now and then, are pleased and satisfied; but if there should be a score added in a month,—if there were to be a hundred,—they would hold up their hands, and say, “This cannot be the work of God; there are too many, it is all excitement;” and they would take counsel together, and try to stop it. “Surely,” they say, “it cannot be the work of God, because it is so great.” Now my argument is that, if we are to judge of a work by its size, I should say that a little work was not the work of God. My

method of reasoning would be this,—the greater the work, the more likely is it to be of God. I do not insist upon that being always the case, because God is in the least conversion, if there be but one, as much as in the conversion of thousands; but, still, if a brother begins to throw discredit upon a work in any place because large numbers are converted, I am ready to meet him, and to prove that he is wrong. Pentecost was not the conversion of some one old woman in a chimney corner through reading a sermon,—Pentecost was not the bringing in of one dear child of a deacon, one who had been in the Sunday-school all his life,—but Pentecost was the conversion, there and then, of three thousand sinners of every sort, through the preaching of the Word of the Lord. And I expect that, where God is specially manifested, and where he gives his churches Pentecosts, we shall have thousands born in a day, multitudes flocking to Christ as the doves to their windows.

Let us begin to enlarge our expectations. Already, in this house, we have had the prophecy fulfilled on a small scale. See how, these many years, the multitudes have pressed and thronged to listen to the gospel. What other attractions have we had? We have not even that wonderful box of music with which men praise God with wind; we have nothing but the plainest possible singing. I am certain that the crowds do not come to hear that; and as for the preaching, I have purposely laid aside all the graces of oratory that I might have had, and tried to make my message as plain and simple as possible. One good man, who is going away from us, said to me, this morning, "I shall miss the plain preaching to which I have been accustomed here. No doubt, there are some rich people, who would like to have it put very finely; but, you see," said he, "I have no education; and I am glad you have preached so that I could understand you, because the other people can do the same if they like." Ay, and they must, too, if they come here, for I never will get away from the simple preaching of Jesus Christ, as plain as ever I can make it. My one work is just to talk of Jesus Christ, and of his blessed gospel, as plainly as I can; and is there anything like it, in all the world, to draw the multitude, to hold the multitude, to impress the multitude,—ay, and to lead them to fly, like doves, to Jesu's wounds, to find salvation there?

Now, coming to our text, I think that the passage refers, first of all, to the Israelite who sees multitudes coming to Jerusalem to worship the one living and true God. He stands on the top of Carmel, and he looks across the Mediterranean, and he sees the ships of Tarshish coming in such great numbers across the sea, scudding along before the wind, that he says, "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" Seen from a distance, the great fleet of vessels seem like a cloud; and as they come nearer, those long lateen sails which we, who have been along the coast of the Mediterranean, remember so well, suggest to him the second figure, "Who are these that are flying like doves to their dovecots?" It was the promise being fulfilled, "the ships of Tarshish first," the men from the far-off lands hurrying up that they might worship with the multitude that kept holy day in the sacred city.

Now we may leave both these figures, and use the text as the exclamation of the Church of God when she expresses her wonderment at what God is doing in the conversion of sinners: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

I. First, WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD BE SO MANY,—that they should "fly as a cloud," like doves in flocks?

The answer to that enquiry is another question,—Why should they not be many? *There are a great many sinners in the world*; why should not a great number be converted? When many souls are brought to Christ, they are only relatively many. Usually, alas! they are relatively small. We have sometimes rejoiced greatly when we have had as many as a hundred added to this church in a month; yet I have gone away, and said to myself,—“What is that hundred, after all? It is not sufficient to keep pace with the increase of the population.” It makes us very sad to know that the increase of sinners far exceeds the increase of the converts to God. At present, they do not “fly as a cloud.” They come in scores, perhaps, and we are thankful for that; but they do not come as a cloud, and like a flock of doves flying to their windows. But why should they not do so one of these days? Why should they not do so very soon? If the gospel be but faithfully preached, and the power of prayer be fairly and fully tried, and the Spirit of God be working mightily through the gospel, why should they not come like a cloud? There are plenty of them all over the world. Look at the millions all around us in this nation-city,—scarcely to be called a city,—for it is a very world for multitude. Think of the millions of inhabitants in the British islands, who still remain unconverted. There is no fear of our nets being drawn to shore empty because there are no fish. We may be bad fishermen, but there are plenty of fish. When we fire in among the birds, the coveys are large enough. There is no reason, except bad marksmanship, why we should not hit some among them, for there are plenty of them. When I hear of a minister fearing that his congregation will suffer because another chapel is brought near his, I feel ashamed of him. Go and build a whole street of chapels, if you like; if the gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached there, you will fill them. If it is not, you will not. You need not fear however many preachers come near you in such a city as this, so swarming with people as it is. And why should they not be converted in swarms, as there are so many of them? Why should they not “fly as the doves to their windows”?

*Has not Christ brought into the world a great redemption?* When I see him dying upon yonder cross, I cannot sit down, and watch his amazing sufferings, and then think that he died only for a few, and that, as the result of the travail of his soul, there will be just a few very respectable people redeemed with his precious blood. If you can believe it, you must; but I cannot. I claim for Christ a great reward; I expect that his Father will so abundantly reward him that, when he makes him to see of the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied, it will be with unnumbered and innumerable millions of redeemed men, and women, and children, who shall look unto

him, and live. Up till now, the passion of Christ has only been very partially rewarded. The cross has not, as yet, brought forth its full crop of blessed fruit. Jesus—that precious “grain of wheat” that was cast into the ground to die, and so to bring forth fruit,—has not yet yielded the wondrous harvest which shall surely come of that marvellous seed-sowing. O beloved! by the blood that fell upon the sterile earth, and made it fruitful, look for great sheaves and abundant harvests, and begin already to sing the harvest home song in anticipation of that great ingathering. Yes; Christ’s converts must “fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows,” for he has bought, with his precious blood, a multitude that no man can number. They must come in great multitudes, because he has attractions which they cannot resist. Let him but be made known to them, and they must come to him. Well has it been said,—

“His worth if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole world would love him, too.”

“But they are blind,” says one. I know they are; but cannot he open their eyes? “They are deaf,” says another. That also is true; but cannot he unstop their ears? “But their hearts are hard,” says a third. Yes, so they are; but cannot he soften them, or take them away, and give them hearts of flesh? Oh, with such a Christ as ours, I must believe that sinners must come to him in vast crowds. He must have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. God always works according to scale; he never made a great cause to produce a little result; and when he himself becomes incarnate,—when he himself bleeds and dies,—when he gives himself up as a sacrifice for sin, I must expect that men will come to him “as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows.”

And why should they not come in crowds *when the Spirit of God is quite able to lead them to come?* That same Holy Spirit, who converts one, can just as easily convert a hundred. The gospel, applied by the Spirit of God to a dozen souls, can manifestly convert a thousand, or a million. Spiritual force is like fire; give me but one spark, and I can set a city all ablaze. One little lamp, overturned by a cow, caused Chicago to be swept away in flames. One match could cause a prairie conflagration of almost immeasurable extent. There is, practically, no limit to fire; and there is absolutely no limit to the power of the Spirit of God. He has but to work, and the same truth, which converted one soul to-day, can convert ten thousand or ten millions to-morrow. Why, then, should he not make them willing in the day of his power, so that they should “fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows.”

Once more, let us reflect that *heaven is very great, and the preparations which grace has made are very large.* That is a most gracious sentence in Christ’s parable of the great supper, “Yet there is room.” If we could enter heaven, at this moment, I warrant you that we should not hear the angels or the redeemed from among men talking of the place being overcrowded. If we went down its

shining streets, we should see many mansions furnished and prepared, and the destined inhabitants must occupy them. There is many a sacred joy laid up in store, and those for whom it is intended must have it. Heaven is not a place prepared in vain, which will, at last, prove to be a failure. You may build a city, but you cannot fill it with inhabitants at your own pleasure. I saw, in the South of France, part of a city, with street after street of well-built houses, with fountains, and a cathedral, but the streets were green with grass, the fountains were full of filth, and the houses were inhabited by the poorest of the poor, or else were standing empty. But heaven, at the last, shall not be like that. Oh, no! the wedding shall be furnished with guests. At the great King's banqueting-table, there will not be one empty seat; no David will be missing in that day. The Lord shall gather in all his elect from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South; and they shall "fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows."

## II. Now, secondly, WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY?

As scuds the light cloud before the breath of the tempest, so they come to Christ. As fly the doves, with swift wings, to their cotes, so do they speed to the Saviour; but why do they come to him in such a hurry? These new converts are not to be kept back. Old saints preach patience to them, but they will have none of it. They tell them to wait awhile, but they feel that they cannot wait; so they "fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows." Why do they fly?

The first answer is, they fly to Christ, *because they are driven, and cannot help flying to him.* When the Spirit of God lays hold upon a man,—and, like the wind, he bloweth where he listeth,—I warrant you that that man must fly to Jesus. He can hold out no longer; he must repent, he must believe, he must have Christ, and he must have him *now*. See, there he is, on his knees! He cries to God for mercy; and he adds many tears to his earnest entreaties. He cannot wait for the blessing, and he will take no denial; he cries, "Give me Christ, or else I die." And well he may, for the blessed Spirit, like a strong North wind, is blowing behind him, and making him to be one of those who fly like a cloud.

Why do they fly? They may well fly, *because they are in danger.* Do you wonder that a man is in a hurry to escape when he sees the gulf of hell yawning before him? These sinners, who are in such haste to fly to Christ, are like doves pursued by a hawk. Satan is after them; sin is pursuing them; death is drawing near them, and hell is close at their heels; so they are rightly alarmed and distressed. Do not tell me about seeking Christ calmly and quietly; you cannot do it if once your conscience is thoroughly aroused. If you realize that sin is upon you, that God condemns you because of your sin, and that, by-and-by, you may be where hope and mercy can never come to you,—

"In flames that no abatement know,  
Though briny tears for ever flow,"—

why, you must fly then! That is not the time for roosting or resting; you must fly, like a dove to its dovecot, when you have a true sense of the danger in which you are placed through your sin.

Besides that, *these flying sinners have strong desires within them.* The dove flies to her dovecot because she wants to be there, and she will not be happy until she gets there. I sometimes see a man throw a pigeon up into the air, that it may find its way home. It usually wheels about for a little while, as though it were uncertain which direction it should take; but, presently, its quick eye catches sight of some familiar landmark, or by instinct it knows which is its way home, and then, away it goes. There is no turning to the right hand, or to the left; but, straight as an arrow shot from a bow, it flies towards its window. So is it with a soul that the Spirit of God has once quickened. It longs for Christ, it pines for Christ; it may hesitate, and look about to find the way it is to go to find him; but, at last, it says within itself, "There he is," and away it goes, like the doves to their windows. Do you wonder that it does so when the sacred instinct, the holy desire, is so strong within it?

Why do they fly? Well, they may well fly, *because they have such a short time in which to reach the Saviour.* I cannot tell,—for I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet,—but I may be addressing someone who will never see the sun rise again. There may be an unsaved soul, in this place, who must be saved ere twelve o'clock shall come round, or that soul will be lost for ever. We have had deaths, before now, while the service was proceeding in this Tabernacle; and such a thing may happen again, and strike us with sudden sorrow as well as with deep solemnity. But, in any case, mortal man has but a short time to live; and some—we know not to which among us this may relate,—have a very, very short time to live. The Rabbi's answer to a foolish question was a wise one. When he was asked, "How many days before he dies should a man repent?" he replied, "One day before he dies; and, as he may die to-day, or to-morrow, he had better repent at once." So, as we sang, a little while ago,—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away  
Like doves to Jesu's wounds;"—

using all possible haste, because the day is far spent, and the night is at hand in which you will not be able to find your way to the shelter of perishing sinners which is now available for you.

III. A third question is,—**WHY DO THEY FLY AS DOVES,**—that is, all together,—in a covey,—in a flock, so that they look like a moving cloud?

Well, the first reason is, *because they are all in one common danger;* and, usually, when persons are in that condition, they give up their bickerings against one another, and join heartily together. Each one, as he becomes anxious for himself, also feels a similar anxiety for his fellows; so they band themselves together, and "fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows." Souls convinced of sin have no time or inclination to quarrel. When a man feels that he must "flee from the wrath to come," he does not notice that someone

else is not respectful to him. No, he thinks of himself as a lost sinner; and lost sinners must not be so foolish as to stand upon their dignity, nor even to insist upon their rights and privileges. At such times, they are willing to stand in the aisle, or to be crowded up in a corner anywhere, so long as they can but hear the gospel; and they will bear anything from their fellow-men if they may but find Christ together. It is wonderful what communion of spirit springs up among them. One, who has himself been under conviction, has seen another weeping on account of sin, and he has said, "Well, if I do not find Christ myself, I hope that young man will do so. If I am never to be saved, I do hope that poor woman, whom I saw in such an agony of spirit, may soon find joy and peace in believing." And, sometimes, when they hardly dare to pray for themselves, they will pray for one another; and when they scarcely have any hope for themselves, they will entertain very kind desires concerning those who have sat next to them, who have been under impression. They are too much taken up with the solemnities of their condition before God to have time or wish for contention; and, therefore, they do not quarrel and fight, as a number of hawks might do, but they fly together in one band, as a company of doves might be expected to do.

Besides that, they fly together, *because they are seeking one common refuge*. They seem to say to one another, "Are you seeking the Saviour? So am I. Are you anxious to get rid of sin? So am I? Are you desirous to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus? So am I. Do you want the Spirit of God to renew you? So do I." So, in these various points, they are so closely bound together that they fly as a cloud. Besides, the Holy Spirit has already changed their nature to such an extent that they are all seeking that which is holy. Once, they were like the hawk, the bird of prey; they were of an angry spirit, and they strove with one another. But penitence imparts to those who possess it a dove-like character. When sin is being mourned over, pride lies low. When transgression and iniquity stare a man in the face, and humble him, he becomes gentle, and tender, and patient; he mourns like a dove without its mate, and he seeks the Saviour, in the hope that, finding him, he will also find peace and comfort of heart.

For all these reasons, convinced sinners, when God is dealing with them, get close together, and they "fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows." I would like again to see such a cloud of them here as we have sometimes seen. When I came back from my holiday, two years ago, and met the hundred and fifty, or thereabouts, who had sought and found the Saviour during the special services, it was a pleasant thing to listen to their hearty singing, and to hear them talk in their own simple, earnest style of the way in which Christ had met with them. It was cheering indeed to my heart to see these doves thus flying as a cloud. Oh, for another such flight! The Lord send it to us speedily! Let us believingly pray for it, then shall we have it, for he is sure to grant us the desire of our hearts.

IV. There is only one other question which I will try to answer.

Let me remind you that we have already had these three enquiries,—Who are these converts that they should be so many as to fly as a cloud? Who are they that they should fly so fast, like a flock of pigeons or doves, hurrying to their dovecots? Who are they that they should fly together, so as to make one cloud, one flock of doves? Now, lastly, let us ask,—WHO ARE THEY THAT THEY SHOULD FLY THIS WAY? I mean, what makes them fly to Christ? What makes them fly to his Church? I can understand that, when they are in danger, they should fly, but why do they fly this way? The answer is, because it is the dovecot of souls. Christ Jesus is the owner of this dovecot; nay, more than that, he himself is the dovecot.

So, first, like a flock of doves, they fly this way, *because they are seeking safety*, and there is no safety for them except in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the safety that is in him? It is this. It is inevitable that God must punish sin; but he sent his Son into the world, and laid on him the iniquity of all who ever will believe on him. He punished Christ instead of them; and, therefore, he cannot and will not punish them; for, to punish the same offence twice, would not be justice. To exact the penalty of sin first at the hand of the Divine Surety and Substitute, and then to exact it again at the sinner's hand, would not be right; and the Judge of all the earth will do right. So, because God has exacted, at the hand of his dear Son, the ransom price for our iniquity, therefore all, for whom Christ died, are for ever clear of all liability; and if thou believest on him, thou hast the mark of those for whom he died. If thou dost trust him, thou hast proof positive that thou art one of his. If thou dost rely upon the merit of his blood and righteousness, that is clear evidence that he gave his life a ransom for thee, and thou canst never be sent to hell. Thou canst not be punished for thy sin, for Christ has borne the punishment of it. Thy guilt was laid on him, and all thy sin is gone for ever; it cannot be brought against thee any more. This is the comfort of all believers; and therefore do these people come flying to Christ to get this safety. Like doves, they fly to the dovecot, that they may be in safety there.

But they want more than safety; *they also need rest, and a dovecot is a place of rest to a dove*. I went, some time ago, into one of those old dovecots which used to belong, by a sort of right, to large estates. A man must have a considerable amount of property before he was allowed to possess a dovecot. With my guide, I entered a square building, and I saw that, up the four walls, which were very lofty, there were almost innumerable places made for the pigeons, and they all seemed to be full. We could not stay very many minutes in the place, but we could see tiers upon tiers of nests of pigeons, all occupied by the softly-cooing birds. That is just what is meant here. When the doves are pursued by the hawk, they fly to the dovecot, and there they find both safety and rest. It is their home; there, they enjoy themselves to the full. And, oh! what a sweet rest we have in our Divine Columbarium, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! We are so protected and preserved in him, that we rest in perfect security. Jesus Christ is the "home, sweet

home" of his people; we find ourselves completely at home when once we get to him. Wherever we wander, there is no place like this home. A swallow has two homes; one here, in the summer; and another in the sunny South, in the winter. I bade the swallows "Good-bye" a week or two ago; but I daresay that I shall soon see some of them again in their other home. But a dove has only one home; winter or summer, she lives in the selfsame dovecot. So is it with a believer; he has only one home, and that is his Master's bosom. He loves Jesus, he rests in Jesus, and Jesus is therefore the home of his spirit.

Now, in closing my discourse, shall I tell you why some of you love to come to Christ's house as well as to Christ himself? I think, first, that you like to come where God's people assemble, *because your food is there*. It must be one main part of the business of the minister, on the Sabbath day, to feed his people; and if he does that, they will be sure to flock around him. Did you ever stand, in the square of St. Mark at Venice, as the clock struck two? If you have ever done so, you have seen the pigeons come flying down in such flocks that they cover all the ground; you may even walk among them, and they will not mind you. Somebody always feeds them at two o'clock, and they know it, and they come then because they are fed. I will be bound to say that, if I were to employ a musician to go there to-morrow at two o'clock, and to play on a flute to them, but to give them no barley, they would not come. And if he were to go there dressed in the particular robes adapted to St. Monday, or whatever "saint's day" it is to-morrow, the pigeons would not come if his hands were empty; but if he gives them barley, they will come, however he is dressed, and whatever music he may play. And we love to come to the house of God because, like doves, we have appetites, and we like to be fed; and if the finest of the wheat be scattered in the form of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are sure to be there, to eat and to be satisfied.

We love to be there, next, *because our companions are there*. The doves fly to their windows because there are other doves there that they love; and we sing, with Dr. Watts,—

" My soul shall pray for Zion still,  
While life or breath remains;  
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,  
There God my Saviour reigns."

In the midst of the Lord's people, we have formed associations that will outlast all the ties of blood; for, in that land where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, ties formed here will endure for ever there. Fathers in Christ will still be fathers there; mothers in Israel will continue to be mothers there; friends in Christ will be friends for ever there. If the gospel had done nothing else for some of us but introduce us to dear friends to whom we are knit for eternity, it would have been an everlasting blessing to us. We fly, like doves to our windows, because there are other doves there, and we wish to be with them.

Some of us fly there, *because our young are there*. No dove flies

so swiftly home as that mother-dove that has young ones awaiting her return; and there is, I think, no man who loves the Church of God better than he does who has young children in it. Remember how the psalmist wrote, "Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God." Blessed be his holy name, he is my father's God; he was my grandfather's God; he was my great grandfather's God; he was the God of all my ancestors as long as we have any record of them; and I am glad to say that he is the God of my sons, too; so I must love him, and rejoice in him. Fathers and mothers, I hope you will all have this tie to the Church of God, for it is a very tender one, and also a very strong one. May you come to love the Church of God because your children are there!

Last of all, we fly to Christ, and to his Church, *because our all is there*. Mr. John Wesley used to sing,—

"No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in this wilderness;"—

and he had not any; and when the good man came to die, all the wealth he had in the world was less than £10. When he was asked how he would dispose of his plate, he said that he had only two silver spoons, one at York, and one in London, for everything else had gone into the great cause of his Master; and we best prove that we love Christ when everything we have is given up to him, and all our wealth, and all our strength, and all our joy, and everything else is found in him, so that Christ is all, and in all. When he is all to you, you will fly to him as a dove flies to its window. God help you all to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

### ISAIAH LX.

This is a chapter full of good news, a prophecy of the bright days that are yet to come to this dark world. These dull days are not to last for ever. The reign of wickedness will come to an end, and earth shall have the bright sunlight of Jehovah's presence. The words are addressed to the Church of God;—it little matters whether to the Jewish or the Gentile Church; for, now, they are all one in Christ, and there is no distinction in the message to both Jews and Gentiles.

Verses 1, 2. *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

We have had abundant proof of the darkness, and of the grossness of that darkness, for these many centuries; now we are to look—and I trust that we can already see it in part,—for the arising of the Sun of righteousness, first upon the Church, and then upon the whole world.

3, 4. *And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves*

together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

Or, rather, "shall be carried as by a nurse upon her side." The strong ones—the sons—shall come walking; the weaker ones—the daughters—shall be carried like children who need to be nursed; but they shall all come. To-day, the Church of Christ has to "go." The message to Christ's disciples still is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The Church must send her heralds far and wide to tell the good news; but a blessed change will be wrought when the nations will come to hear the story, flocking in crowds to listen to it, and Christ will be sought by those who never sought him before.

"O long-expected day, begin;  
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin!"

5. *Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged;*

First, the blessing shall seem too great to be real, and the Church shall tremble with fear; but, afterwards, she shall believe in it, and rejoice in it, and so her heart shall be enlarged.

5. *Because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee,—*

The sailors shall come to Christ in great numbers; and when they are converted, they will be the best of missionaries. Each ship shall be a floating Bethel, and every port at which they touch shall be the gladder for the good news they will have to tell: "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee,"—

5. *The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

The soldiers, as well as the sailors, shall enter the service of the King of kings. Oh, what a happy day it will be when every soldier shall have enlisted beneath the banner of peace! Then they will be able to fight the good fight of faith every day, and to be the means of saving multitudes of precious souls. According to this verse, great importance is attached to the conversion of sailors and soldiers; God grant that some of us may live to see this prophecy fulfilled!

6. *The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;*

Wealthy nations, of the Oriental type, who ride upon camels and dromedaries, and who have long been under the sway of the false prophet, Mahomet, shall yield allegiance to the Son of God.

6, 7. *All they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.*

Pastoral people—travellers from place to place in the wilderness—shall come to Christ. There shall be no untamed nation, no barbarous people that shall continue to oppose the coming of that glorious kingdom of the blessed God in those happy, happy days. As for the Church, she shall be so astonished that she shall cry out,—

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?*  
Or, "to their cotes."

9. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first,—*

Tarshish was some country far away from Palestine; it is difficult to say exactly where it was, but the Phœnicians made their most distant voyages thither. It may have been this very island in which we live; and we know

that they came hither for tin. It is a very remarkable thing that islanders have usually been the first people to be converted to Christ. If you will, at this moment, think of any places where true religion is strong and dominant, you will naturally think of islands. Then, the mention of ships shows what regard God has for sailors when he says, "The ships of Tarshish first,"—

9, 10. *To bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls,—*

And it is so to-day. Some, who were total strangers to God, and to his grace, have now become the most earnest ministers of Christ: "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls,"—

10, 11. *And their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually;*

No alarms of war will cause them then to shut the iron gates.

11. *They shall not be shut day nor night;*

There shall be free access to Zion, — to the Church, — and to Christ himself, at all times.

11—17. *That men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron:*

You see, it is better, and better, and better, for that is God's way with his people;—to bless them, and then to bless them over again, and again, and again, giving them grace upon grace, grace to qualify them to receive yet more grace.

17—22. *I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.*

Oh, that "his time" were come! The happy period is hastening on, and it will come at the right time. We ought not to be dispirited by delays, for it will surely come; it will not tarry a moment beyond the time appointed by God, blessed be his holy name! Amen.