

## DAYS OF SPLENDOR HAVE ARRIVED

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*“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom”  
(Is 35:1).*

This beautiful Messianic prophecy gives us a good sense of what our times are really like, this new age of salvation, these final days of the world in which we live. We live in the prophesied and longed-for days of the Messiah, the Messianic days, the days of fulfillment. With the coming of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God has entered the world for our salvation to bring us the splendor of God. In him, our sins are forgiven, and we are restored to union with God. This gives us true joy in our heart and fills us with God's splendor and illumination. It makes us new, renewing us interiorly, making us a new creation. Jesus Christ transforms us, putting divine life into us, and giving us the gift of eternal life with him now. It is a new quality of life which elevates us, making us new men (Eph 4:22-24), seeking now the things that are above and no longer the pleasures of the world (Col 3:1-2). The forgiveness and justification of Christ give us true happiness, which only God can give.

This new power entered the world at the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. It is a reign of peace on earth, the reign of God over the hearts of men and women. It is a new age, already begun in the midst of this old age, and those who accept Christ are born again in him and see the splendor of this kingdom. Christ shines in their hearts (2 Cor 4:6), illuminating them from within, filling them with splendor.

Isaiah prophesies this new age in which we now live in Christ. And Jesus proves that he has power on earth to forgive sins and introduce us into his kingdom by curing the paralytic after telling him that his sins are forgiven (Lk 5:20,23-24).

Isaiah describes the Messianic era in which we now live with Jesus, the Messiah: The desert “like the crocus ... shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing” (Is 35:2). There is no greater interior joy than the forgiveness of sins and the light of Christ shining in our hearts, making us resplendent before God. Then our desert blooms, and we sing for joy. “The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it [to our desert], the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God” (Is 35:2). The glory of Lebanon is its trees: cedars, cypresses, and pines (Is 60:13). They will grow in the desert of Judah in the Messianic days. We now live among these glorious trees. We live in the glory of Lebanon, for our Messiah has come and is with us, renewing us, filling us with God's love and light.

This is waters breaking forth in the wilderness, “and streams in the desert” (Is 35:6). So does God treat us in this time of forgiveness and fulfillment. The Messianic times are days of splendor, glory, and light. Let us then rejoice in them, forgiven and justified, clothed in the robe of righteousness (Is 61:10), and adorned with the diadem of the glory of God (Bar 5:2).

“For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert” (Is 35:6). It will be a dream time, a time of fulfillment and splendor. “I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys” (Is 41:18). It will be a time of great beauty, the beauty of rushing streams in the mountains and peaceful reflecting lakes in the valleys. In the desert will grow the stately trees of Lebanon. “I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together” (Is 41:19). These glorious trees do not grow in the desert; but in the Messianic times they will. It will be a spacious, glorious, and splendid time.

This is how we are to see our days, as days of glorious fulfillment and grace, a time of new life in the Lord, and joy. God renews our hearts and fills our lives with the peace of heaven in his Son, Jesus Christ. We are remade in him, transformed, and renewed. We walk in the light of his face, and God is the glory of our strength. We are the ones “who exult in thy name all the day and extol thy righteousness” (Ps 88:16). We are the blessed people “who know the festal shout” (Ps 88:15).

Advent and Christmas are above all the times of blessed fulfillment and peace on earth. This is because of what Christ and his coming have brought into the world. This is a time when we openly rejoice in the gift of new life that God has given us in his Son and in his kingdom on earth. There is no greater blessing on earth than to belong to the kingdom of heaven here and now, the kingdom of the age to come, here already in this old age, renewing it in God’s love. The kingdom transforms our world, making it like a desert that blooms and is filled with stately cedars, cypresses, and pines, aromatic woods that freshen and cool the air. So is it to be forgiven and justified by the Sun of Righteousness, who now lives among us, refreshing our spirits and illuminating our hearts.

“I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys” (Is 41:18). “...for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people” (Is 43:20). This is what we have received in Christ, the Lord. This is the meaning of the forgiveness he gives us.

Jesus proves his power to remove our sins in his healing of the paralytic. He healed him to prove in a verifiable way that his sins were forgiven by his word. This, he does for all who accept him in faith as their Lord. His power to do so flows from his death on the cross, which justly satisfied the Father and absorbed his righteous wrath against us, reconciling us to God. The kingdom of God has come upon you, he told us, and demonstrated it by casting out evil spirits (Mt 12:28). He saw Satan fall like lightning from the sky (Lk 10:18). This is his decisive victory over Satan, the beginning of the end of his dominion.

Now, then, is the time to enter God’s kingdom, to live in his peace, to be at peace with God in our heart and to live in peace with everyone. The glory of Lebanon has been given to us, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. We see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God (Is 35:2).

Hence we should live in great moderation, in the joy of our heart, in the nearness of the Lord. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is near” (Phil 4:4-5). This is how we are to live in these days before Christmas—in great moderation, for the sake of the inner joy that fills our heart, guarding it and keeping it. A simple, quiet life is best. It is like guarding a candle

flame from the wind so that it might burn brightly before the Lord. So should our souls be as we prepare ourselves for his coming so that our hearts might be established and “blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (1 Thess 3:13).

It is our joy during this most blessed season to prepare ourselves ever more for our Lord’s glorious coming, so that he may find us blameless in holiness, prepared, and watching. May our hearts be pure and undivided, reserved for him alone. It is our joy to empty our hearts of all else, especially those who have consecrated their lives completely to him. He promises them the hundredfold reward (Mk 10:29-30). May we be among their number and live in a manner worthy of this calling.

Let each use his gift to prepare the earth for the Lord’s coming, each in the way God has called him. To live for God alone is the greatest joy of life, to empty our hearts and lives of all else but him—if God gives us the call and the grace to do so—is the greatest thing we can do. To live with an undivided heart in this world is to welcome his kingdom, receive his light, and become a light in the darkness for those who have lost the way.

May you therefore grow daily in holiness, renouncing the pleasures of this world, and allowing God to establish your hearts and make them blameless before him at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his holy ones (1 Thess 3:13).

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