**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 25 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**SALVATION IN ZION by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*I will place salvation in Zion.*

*Isaiah 46:13*

THE FORTY-SIXTH AND FORTY-SEVENTH CHAPTERS OF the prophecy of Isaiah constitute a complete message in themselves. The forty-sixth has to do with God's determination to destroy Babylon; the forty-seventh describes that destruction.

The reading of the forty-sixth chapter brings before the mind a condition of affairs that might almost be described as chaotic.

The city of God was in ruins; the people of God were scattered; the nation, peculiar to God for the fulfilment of His purpose in the world, was represented by the feeblest remnant. The chosen people of God are seen by the prophet, under the dominion of Babylon. Then the mind of Isaiah, illumined by the Spirit, sees a Deliverer - how far or how near perhaps he himself could not have told - and in the wake of that Deliverer Babylon destroyed, and the people of God restored to the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. In delivering this message, the prophet instituted a contrast between Babylon and Zion; between the city of God and the city of men; between all that man is able to do without God, and all that God is able to do in spite of man. It is a contrast between idols and God; a contrast between the gods of Babylon, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth," and the God of the chosen people, Jehovah. The contrast may be crystallized in two very brief declarations; idols are created and carried; Jehovah creates and carries. That is forevermore the difference between false and true religion, the difference between all idolatry and the worship of God, the difference between Babylon and Zion, between good and evil, between right and wrong. So that the contrast in this chapter, being peculiarly a contrast between religions, the conception of the prophet most evidently is, that what a nation is, depends upon the religion of the nation. Babylon has worshipped idols. Zion is the center of the worship of Jehovah. Idol worship means that men make idols and then have to carry them. They make them, carry them, and put them down; and they stay where they are placed, they cannot move. Their makers cry to them, but they cannot answer. When they move, it is because they are carried. In contrast, God creates, and whatever He creates He carries. Babylon makes an idol, and puts it down. It never moves. Jehovah makes a man, and carries the man; and if the man have vision and wisdom he worships Jehovah.

Of idolatrous Babylon, Isaiah saw the destruction. It was the vision of faith. Had we been there, with any other than the prophetic outlook, listening to any other voice than the voice of faith perpetually singing its song in the heart, we should have said that idolatry was strong and true religion weak. Behold Babylon, mighty Babylon; wealthy, equal to the conquest of the world; Babylon with its splendor and its pride! Behold Zion in ruins; her sons languishing, all her wealth gone, her power departed! But faith sees neither BabyIon nor Zion pre-eminently; but the idols and Jehovah. Faith knows that the conflict is not between Babylon and Zion, but between idols and Jehovah. Faith foretells the downfall of Babylon, and does so in an age when no one will believe the message save those who live by faith, and by faith see Him Who is invisible, and so are able to sing the song of ultimate triumph long ere the crash of battle commence.

The last word in the great movement which declares that Jehovah is determined upon the destruction of Babylon the word of my text, "I will place salvation in Zion." There are three lines of thought suggested for our consideration in this text The great ideal is first suggested; salvation in Zion. Then the fact of failure is recognized; Zion without salvation. Finally, the prophetic word of promise declares that Zion shall be restored to the fulfilment of ideal, "l will place salvation in Zion."

The great ideal; "Salvation in Zion." For the interpretation of this phrase, the fullness and finality of the whole Bible is needed. Two antagonistic principles are discovered in the history of humanity as revealed in the Scriptures of truth. Whereas in our study of the Bible, we discover remarkable differences as between the old economy and the new, there are great underlying, unifying principles running from Genesis to Revelation. I am not going to deal at length with that principle of antagonism to faith which is represented by Babylon, but will state it in a few brief sentences. Babylon is first manifest as a confederacy without God in the history of Babel. From that moment throughout the whole of the Scriptures, whether Babylon be an actual city with an actual king, or whether the actual has passed and the principle of Babylon which is human confederacy without God alone remains, Babylon is against Zion. In the final book of the Bible, among the visions of the Seer of Patmos, we see at last the Lamb enthroned on Zion's hill, and immediately there follows the song of the multitudes "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great."

Let us now restrict our examination to the other principle, and taking out of our text the two words "Zion" and "Salvation" attempt to see what they suggest. When we read the Old Testament, the word Zion seems to thrill to the tireless music of a psalm. Zion is the synonym for everything of which the Hebrew thought with pride, with satisfaction, with gladness, and with rejoicing. What does Zion mean? That is a question that has not often been asked. We are so familiar with all that Zion stands for symbolically that we have been slow to inquire into the real meaning of the word. It means desert. That in itself is a suggestive fact. We find the first historic reference to Zion in the Book of Samuel, when after all Israel had made David king at Hebron, he captured Zion from the Jebusites. This Zion was a rocky fastness, devoid of verdure, in the center of verdant and glorious hills, so that presently men will say "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear Him;" but itself was desert. A city had been built upon it long ere David captured it, and being a rocky fastness it was considered impregnable. When the Hebrews sang of Zion they never thought of the desert. The Hebrews associated with the name great essential values, and principles, and aspirations.

With the degeneration of the instrument through which God intended testimony concerning Himself to be borne to the world, the conception of Zion itself degenerated also, and men thought of it only from the civic standpoint, the national standpoint, the patriotic standpoint. These are all secondary things. A devout Hebrew who knew the secret mystery of his own life, and who lived in true consciousness of his relationship to Jehovah, sang of Zion and thought of Zion, as the place of Divine founding; the place of Divine dwelling; the place of Divine revealing. Zion for the Hebrew was the synonym of the Divine presence, the Divine government, the Divine unveiling; and the thought that came to the heart of the Hebrew when turning from those central verities to consider his own relationship to Zion was always the thought of the other word in my text, salvation.

Let us inquire into the meaning of this great word. The particular word, here translated "salvation," is somewhat rare in the Old Testament. The root significance is that of freedom. The idea here is that of safety based upon freedom. Zion was the home of the free; because it was the dwelling place of God, it was the place where bondage could not continue. Zion, the place of Divine dwelling and Divine revealing and Divine government, was the place of human security, and human realization, and human happiness. The captive exiles sang of Zion, and sighed for Zion, because Zion was the dwelling place of the great King, and consequently the place of the perfect Kingdom. Zion and salvation to the thinking of the Hebrew were always closely associated.

I turn from these Old Testament Scriptures to those of the New. Zion is first mentioned in Matthew, and finally in Revelation. In Matthew, it is mentioned by the citation of Hebrew prophecy, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and riding upon an ass, And upon a colt the foal of an ass."

The word occurs again in John's record of the same event; so that in the gospel stories, the thought of Zion is maintained in relation to the King Who came to establish the Divine order and bring in the Kingdom of God. When Paul was writing his great letter to the Romans he also quoted from the ancient prophecy and showed that; the spiritual ideal was to be fulfilled in the Christian Church. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, writing to the Hebrew Christians, tells them "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." When Peter was writing to those of the dispersion in Bithynia and elsewhere, he told them that God had already laid in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and that the preciousness of the cornerstone is made over to all such as believe in Him; and so the spiritual house is being built, the spiritual city is being constructed; the principles of the Divine government are being established in the world. We come at last to the Book of Revelation, and in chapter fourteen, we read these words, "I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name, and the name of His Father, written on their fore-heads." That is the ultimate fulfilment of the Hebrew purpose and ideal; and closely associated with it is the declaration "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

What then is the ideal suggested by this text? Let the local colouring fade. Let the immediate application of the ancient prophecy be forgotten, and the economy of God concerning Israel be out of sight. The principle revealed as a great ideal is that of the establishment of the Divine order in the world; Zion instead of Babylon. Babylon, the city and the life of godlessness, Zion the city and the life of godliness. All the prophetic writers and all the prophetic singers in the Old and New saw the ultimate victory, the victory of Zion over Babylon, of Jehovah over idols, of that religion which consists in worship of the One Who creates and carries, over that religion which consists in the creating of idols which men have to carry, and carry until overburdened by their weight they stoop to dust and destruction.

The startling recognition of the text is that it infers disassociation between Zion and salvation. It reveals the fact that there may be Zion without salvation. It suggests that the city may remain ostensibly the city of God, and yet not be a city of salvation. Is not that the story of all the trouble with which the prophets had to deal? Was not that the actual, local condition of affairs in the midst of which Isaiah and all those great Hebrew prophets exercised their ministry? Zion without salvation; the city of God, without God; the place of the Divine revelation, but no revelation; the center from which the law is to proceed for the benefit of the world, but no law proceeding from the center, the temple of worship with all its rites and ceremonies, but no worship; or in the words of the New Testament, form without power. That is the tragic side of the picture presented; the purpose of God, thwarted, prevented, hindered, unrealized. Zion, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King, the place to which captive eyes look with longing, the place to which the remnant of captives did return; but Zion without salvation, Zion, mark it well, under the yoke of Babylon, Zion mastered by forces which were antagonistic to Zion. That is the appalling picture. That is the condition of affairs in the midst of which the prophet exercised his ministry.

That is the perpetual peril of Zion, of the people of God, of those who name His name, bear His sign, profess His doctrines, claim to be His peculiar people; Zion without salvation, Zion under the yoke of Babylon; Zion, that ought to be against Babylon, preventing its victory, breaking its power; under Babylon's yoke, mastered by Babylon. That is the tragedy of the text. How comes it that Zion is mastered by Babylon? By the introduction of idols! How came the introduction of idols to Zion? By forgetfulness of God. Zion has made for herself idols, and Zion has had to carry the idols she has made, and Zion has been bent and bowed beneath the weight of her own idols. That was a subtle form of idolatry when Israel made the golden calf. What was the golden calf? Read the story carefully and you will find it was a representation of God, for when they made the golden calf they did not ostensibly turn away from the worship of Jehovah. They worshipped God as they sang and danced around the calf. They made the calf to represent God. The golden calf was one of the ancient symbols of religion; the cherubim, the ox for service! Had you talked to the leaders who in the absence of Moses made the golden calf, they would have said, We are not turning from God, we are making something that will help us to worship God. That is idolatry on the part of the people of God. So surely as they make a likeness of God, presently they will worship the likeness and forget God. That is why God forbade the making of any likeness of Himself in order that men should worship. We are far away from the wilderness today, far away from the golden calf, far away in this assembly from image worship in any form, and yet idolatry abides in the Church of God today. The idolatry of the Church of God is seen in her mastery by Babylon, and in her weakness in every hour of stress and strain and strife. Her inability to interpret the will of God, the law of God, and to insist upon it in the world, is born of her complicity with Babylon, and that in turn results from the fact that she has put between herself and God rites, or ceremonies, or priests, or preachers. By such creation of false intermediation as between the soul and God, Zion bends to idolatry; and when Zion bends to idolatry, Babylon with her wealth and her pollution and her godless strength places upon the neck of Zion a yoke, and Zion has lost her power and lost her testimony.

There can be nothing more tragic than Zion without salvation, than the Church of God without the dynamic that makes men free, without the authority that interprets morality in the terms of the eternal, without the voice to which the world is compelled to listen. Zion captured by Babylon is the tragedy of all tragedies. That is the picture of the conditions to which this man delivered his message.

Now finally, hear the word of Jehovah, "I will place salvation in Zion." The ultimate victory of Zion will not be Zion's victory, but Jehovah's victory. Zion will come again to the place of power and testimony and witness through restoration, but the restoration will be wrought by God, "I will bring my righteousness near." Zion had her responsibility and it is clearly indicated. It consists first in a recognition of the difference between the idols and God. Remember that when you make your idol, you must carry your idol, and it becomes your burden. Remember, God made you and still carries you. Break down your idol and cease its worship, and worship the God Who makes and the God Who carries. Refuse to bend the knee to any other than God. Bend the knee to God, make His will supreme, His government the one and only law. Let the Church of God have done with the worship of the golden calf. Let the Church of God have done with her worship of her own rites and ceremonies. Let the Church of God have done admiring her own magnificent organizations. Let the Church embody the principles of Zion, and faith, and return to Jehovah, make His will supreme in all the affairs of her own service, and in all the affairs of the lives of her own people; let her remember and let her return, and then "I will place salvation in Zion." He will make the Church city of free men, for bondage to God is freedom from all other bondage. The neck bent to His yoke is the most erect in the presence of every other form of tyranny. The man wholly submitted to Jehovah is the man who is master of lust and passion and the alluring forces of the world which only win a man, for his destruction. It is the bond-slave of God who is the free man in the world. That is the whole principle of Zion in a sentence.

From this consideration, we gather this application and these lessons. Anything in place of God, or anything that puts God at a distance, is idolatry. When we put something between the soul and God we at once become burden bearers. If our religion is something as between ourselves and God, though our creed be perfectly orthodox as to God, then are we idolaters.

How shall we know? We shall know by our relation to our religion. Let me put a question with all practical force. Are you carrying your religion, or does your religion carry you? That is the test question. There are men and women in this house tonight who are carried by God. They read the great word I read in your hearing, and they understand it, they know it. It is not poetry to them. It is poetry, but it is infinitely more, "I will bear; yea; I will carry." There are men here who, presently, will pass away from the sanctuary, the day's worship done they will take a night's rest, and tomorrow morning will settle back again into the work of the shop, the office, the hospital, and all the way will feel the lift and lilt of their religion. Those are the men who belong to Zion.

There are other men who lay their religion aside when the service is over, they have carried it, it is an observance. They come to the sanctuary because they ought to come once a week at least. It may be that in the morning hour, they will bend the knee in prayer, and also at night; but they are carrying their religion. It is something added on to their life, a department of their life which they lock safe up when they get to business and pleasure. It is a weariness to them, a burden. If they dared they would be rid of it. Then, even though they sing the song in this house, and attend reverently to the preaching, and never take the name of God in vain, they are idolaters, they belong to Babylon and not to Zion. The test of religion is whether you carry it or it carries you; whether it is a weariness and a burden, something that after all if you only dared you would fling overboard; or whether it is the inspiration, the joy, the strength of life. Idolatry is the making of an idol which you can put down in any given place - and you will find it there when you come back. It will not move. There is a good deal of that in the Christian Church. You go away today, you will find your religion here next Sunday; it will not move, but you will be away from it for a week. That is idolatry. True religion is the worship of God, which means that in the busy street, in the midst of perplexing questions in the office and the profession, and amid the thousand and one duties of the home, it carries you, and the song of His praise escapes your lips, and the gladness of His presence is in your heart. That is true religion.

There is Zion. There is Babylon. Oh soul of mine, art thou an idolater, or art thou godly? Dost thou belong to Zion, or dost thou belong to Babylon? Leaving the thought of the individual, or multiplying it into the corporate whole, is this church Zion without salvation; or is salvation here? Are we a company of God's free men and free women and therefore able to pass the word of freedom to the slave, and able to help to snap his chains; or are we enswathed and hindered by the very chains of our religious observances?

How fine are the distinctions of God, and how searching the figures of Holy Scripture. Just where we thought we were safe from observation, He flashes upon us the light that shows that all the things in which we put our trust are false. Zion; the house is there, the name is there, the songs are there, the sacrifices are there, the priests are there! But is salvation there? A man crosses the threshold, is he likely to be helped? Is he likely to touch the unseen, the eternal? If not - listen to me, my brethren - if not, Zion is a more terrible menace than Babylon. Babylon stands aloof and we know where we are. But if Zion is under the influence of Babylon then what can the world do? Let us see to it, I repeat, that Zion is the hill of God, that her citizens are men and women of faith, and then from her goes forth His law which is life and liberty.

My last word ought to be, and shall be a personal one. Go back to the vision of the Lamb upon Mount Zion with Babylon tottering to decay. That day has not yet come, but it is good to look at it. Thank God that the victory must be won. Yet go back over it, and shutting thyself up alone with God, brother mine, sister mine, in an act of lonely dealing with God say, art thou an idolater, or art thou worshipping Jehovah? If some man shall say tonight - God grant he may - I am an idolater, I have carried my religion - then fling it overboard now, and trust in Jehovah. He will carry you, and all your life shall flame with light and thrill with power. May He so bring us to Himself.