

Dreams That Will Never Come True

by H. A. Ironside

"And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; so shall the multitude of all nations be that fight against mount Zion" (Isaiah 29:7, 8).

IT is a recognized principle in homiletics, that is, the science of preaching, that the preacher should never take a text for a pretext, and yet I apprehend that is what I will be charged with doing now, for I do not call attention to this passage of Scripture with the thought of emphasizing its primary meaning, but rather to enforce a very important lesson.

Actually, this twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah refers to an incident in Israel's history, when Sennacherib and the Assyrian host gathered about Jerusalem and vainly thought that they would be able to destroy the city, sweep it out of existence, put the people of Israel to death, or carry them into captivity; and so Jehovah contemplates the enemies as coming down upon their prey. Already it seems to them that their purpose is accomplished. Jerusalem seems to be utterly defenseless against them, but the word of Jehovah, who has never forsaken His people, and who never will forsake those that put their trust in Him, says that they are not to be afraid of this great host, for all their evil thoughts will come to naught, and all their unholy ambitions will end in disappointment. "It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against mount Zion." That is, their dream of overcoming Israel would never be fulfilled.

But I am not going to occupy you with this thought, except to say that there is coming another day in the history of Israel when they will be in dire straits similar to these. They are already thronging back to Palestine, and have very bright hopes before them, but they will still have to face that sad and terrible time of Jacob's trouble, called the great tribulation, the like of which they have never known in the past

and never shall know again. Once more the Gentile powers will be gathered against Jerusalem and will seek to destroy the people of God, but again Jehovah will come to their defense and the Gentile nations will be disappointed, and their dream of destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish people will prove to be utterly unreal.

World Dreams

There are so many dreams that will never be fulfilled—that will never come true. First, there is the dream of finding heart satisfaction and soul rest in the things of this poor world. Have you been dreaming a dream like that? There are many different aspects of that dream. Some people imagine that they can find lasting enjoyment and true pleasure in a low vulgar life of abominable sensuality, and they fling to the winds decency and self-respect, and go down to the lowest depths of carnality and iniquity. Is there any real good to be found in a life like that? If you have tried it, you know in the deepest depths of your soul that you found nothing but sorrow and bitter disappointment. The incurable disease wards in our great hospitals all over this land tell what a wretched blunder men make when they try to find satisfaction or happiness in sensual living, "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." If there is a young man or young woman who has so far forgotten what is true and right and pure as to imagine that it makes little or no difference if you swing loose from the restraints of decency and allow yourself to fall into unclean living, and imagine you are ministering to the desire for happiness, some day you will wake up to find it is a horrid dream, "As when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty." There is no satisfaction to be found in sensuality.

Dreams of Worldly Pleasures

On the other hand, there are many who would look with abhorrence or disgust on any such life, but imagine they are going to find happiness and contentment in the respectable pleasures of this world. These people are of a different character to the grossly sensual. But tens of thousands, yes, millions have tried this before you, and not one man or woman has ever yet found heart rest in the things of this poor world. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is *of the world*. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:16, 17). That is why the world can never satisfy the human heart.

There is a striking passage in Ecclesiastes, in which Solomon tells us

how he tried everything that his day had to offer, only to exclaim at length, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). He gives the reason why the world cannot satisfy men: "he hath set the world in their heart" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). How can a man, created for eternity ever be satisfied with the things of this world? The old Puritans had a rather nice conception of it; they said, "The world is round; the human heart is three-cornered; you can never fill a three-cornered heart with a round world." We sometimes use the figure of a triangle to represent the triune God, and so they used to say, "It takes a triune God to fill a triangular heart to overflowing."

You may be trying to find satisfaction in the world. I can understand that, for I tried it myself. I know something of the meaning of the hymn:

"O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknown.

Now, none but Christ can satisfy,
None other Name for me;
There's love, and life, and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee!

"I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But, ah! the waters failed;
E'en as I stooped to drink they fled,
And mocked me as I wailed.

"The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,
But never wept for Thee,
Till grace my sightless eyes received,
Thy loveliness to see.'

Then I found a satisfaction that has lasted now for forty years, and it will last for all eternity. No, there is nothing in the world that will satisfy the human heart. The man who imagines that this world will meet the cravings of his soul, will some day wake up to find that he has just been dreaming, imagining he was finding peace and satisfaction, but his soul will be empty.

Dreams of World Wealth

There are some who dream that if they could just get a sufficient

amount of money, they would be satisfied. Did you ever see anyone who had enough money to satisfy him? Some years ago a newspaper offered a prize for the best definition for money. The answer that won the prize was this: "Money is a universal provider for everything but happiness." Men may have millions, but money cannot satisfy the soul. The man who imagines he will find heart satisfaction in wealth is doomed to wake up at last bitterly disappointed.

Some imagine they will find peace and satisfaction in fame, in the plaudits of their fellows. But the great of earth, those whose names have become household words, would be the most lonely men of their time if they did not know Christ. No, dear friend, try what you will, you will never find lasting peace outside of Christ.

A Beautiful Young Woman Saved

A number of years ago I was holding special meetings in the First Baptist Church of Los Gatos, California. On my first Sunday morning there, the text was: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13, 14). Sitting in the front pew was a young woman whose pale, emaciated face and great dark hungry eyes attracted my attention. She listened so earnestly. After the meeting I said to the pastor: "Who was the very sickly but intensely beautiful young woman who sat in the front pew?"

"She is a very well bred girl," he replied, "but some years ago she threw Christianity to the winds. She was brought up in a Christian home. She went in for a worldly career, trying to find satisfaction and peace in the things of the world, but within the last five months she has been stricken with that dread disease of tuberculosis, and she has the kind that we call galloping consumption. She has not long to live; she is losing strength day after day, and the doctor says she will soon be gone; and now she is wretched and miserably unhappy."

I prayed for her, and each night I would find myself looking through that audience, hoping she would be there, listening to the gospel, but I never saw her at another meeting. About three weeks later a lady came to me, and said: "Do you remember meeting Miss H—?" I remembered that it was this young woman, and she added, "She is very ill, dying of tuberculosis. She heard you the first time you spoke, and was expecting to attend all the meetings, but she has been too ill. She has sent for you."

"I will be glad to go," was my reply. So we went to the room in which she sat. She excused herself for not standing to greet us, for she was too weak. I said, "I am glad you have sent for me."

"She looked up and said, "Mr. Ironside, the doctor told me yesterday that I have just three weeks to live, and I am not saved. I would like to know Christ. Do you think He will take a girl who rejected Him, deliberately turned her back on Him in health, now that I am bitterly disappointed, and everything I have counted on has gone by the board? Do you think there is any hope for a sinner like me?"

You know things look differently when you realize you have only three weeks to live! Many a one, careless now, would be in dead earnest if he knew that within three weeks he would have to face God and eternity.

"Well," I said, "I understand that you have had a very happy life in some respects; you have been very much sought after and admired by the world."

"Oh, please do not talk of that now," she said, "I am afraid I have been selling my soul for worldly popularity. I thought I was going to find happiness and enjoyment, but now it gives me no peace, no satisfaction, to look back over those years of popularity, those years of worldly pleasure. Only three weeks and I must give an account to God, and I am not saved."

It was a real joy to my own soul to open the Word of God and show her how the blessed Lord Jesus in infinite grace had come all the way from Heaven's fullest glory down to Calvary's deepest depths of woe for her redemption, and if she would put her heart trust in Him, confess her guilt, she would have all the past blotted out. Directing her to John 3:18, I read: "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." And then I put the question to her, "Tell me, do you believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"

"I do."

Then I asked, "Do you believe that God the Father sent Him into this world to die for sinners?" "Yes, it is in the Bible; I do believe it," she replied.

"Do you believe He meant you when He said: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out'?" I asked.

"It is for everybody, isn't it?" she said.

"Yes," I replied, "'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). Are you included in that *whosoever*?"

"Yes," she said, "I believe I am."

"Then tell me," I said, "What does the Lord Jesus Christ say about you? Look at verse eighteen again; notice there are only two classes of people there: the first class, 'he that believeth on him,' and the second class, 'he that believeth not.' Notice there is something predicated of the first class and something of the second class. Of the first it is said, 'He that believeth is not condemned'; and of the second, 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' Now before I ask you to tell me which class you are in, let us bow in prayer."

She could not kneel, but her friend and I knelt in prayer. We asked God by the Spirit to open His Word and bring it home in power to her soul.

"Read it again," I said.

"Do you see the two classes? Which one are you in?"

She was silent for a long time as we knelt there before God, and then she looked up, the tears glistening in her beautiful eyes, and she said, "I am in the first class."

"How do you know?"

"Because I do believe in Him. It doesn't say He won't take me in because I come so late. I have come, and I do believe in Him."

"And what is true of you?" I asked.

She looked at it and whispered, "Not condemned!"

I said, "Is that enough to meet God on?"

She replied, "That will do; not condemned!"

Three weeks from eternity, but resting upon the Word of God! I saw her only twice again, and then my meetings ended. About five weeks later I met the Baptist preacher on the street, and he said, "You remember Miss H—? Do you know that just twenty-one days from the

day you led her to Christ, I was called to her bedside, and I found her just slipping away."

"Can you hear me?" I asked.

"Yes," she said.

"Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"Yes," she answered.

"And what does He say about you?" I asked.

"Not condemned!" and then she whispered, "If you see Mr. Ironside, tell him, 'Not condemned!' It is all right."

Oh, I tell you, dear friend, that was something real, because that young woman had the Word of the living God to rest upon; but there are many who rest upon their own imaginations instead of resting upon God's immutable Word.

Still Other Dreams

Another dream that will never come true is the dream that if you do the best you can, if you live a respectable life, if you join the church, if you give your money for the cause of Christ, then, when you die, you will go to heaven on your own merit. That is the worst dream of all, and in eternity men who have died trusting in something of that character will be "Even...as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty."

Mark this! God has provided the bread of life whereby, if a man eat thereof, he shall live forever. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

What is it to eat Christ? It is this, receive Him into your inmost being. Just as you take food and receive it into your physical body, so take Christ. When by faith you receive Him into your own life and heart, you are eating the living bread, and will never waken to find out that this is all a dream.

People of the world think that Christians are dreamers. Thirty years ago when I was a Salvation Army officer, they were having a street meeting, and a poor fellow who had been deep in sin, but wonderfully converted, was standing out on the street telling what the Lord had

done for him. A great big burly man in the crowd suddenly shouted out: 'Wake up, old man, wake up; you're dreaming!

At that a little girl stepped up to him, and said, "Oh, please, sir, please don't wake him up. That is my daddy, and he is such a good daddy now. But he used to be so different before he began to "dream," as you call it. He was always beating mother, he spent all his money for drink, and we were so miserable; but when he began to "dream" like this, everything was different. He brings his money home now and provides for us all. He is so kind to mother and to all of us, and we want him just like he is now."

Oh yes, the world thinks it is the Christian, the believer, who is the dreamer, but we know that it is the Christ-rejecter who is dreaming. The unsaved man who hopes that everything is going to come out all right, when in reality it is all wrong, and will be so, for all eternity, unless he turns to Christ, is the real dreamer. Be persuaded that there is no other Saviour but Jesus; there is no other way but His way. Do you want to know the Saviour? You have tried the world, and imagined you could find peace and happiness in what it had to offer you. May it not be that today God is awakening you out of your dreams? You have never found peace in the world, and you never will. Why not come to Christ?

"While we pray, and while we plead,
While you see your soul's deep need;
While your Father calls you home,
Will you not, my brother, come?"

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