

## The Time of thy Visitation

By  
Rev. H. P. Robinson

*“Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19:44)*

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The words of Jesus in this melancholy passage sounds the death knell to the most ill-fated city of antiquity. It came towards the close of his earthly ministry. There is a pathos and regret in it that reveals the depths of compassion that must have crushed the soul of the Son of God as he beheld the beautiful city that would soon be a waste heap of blood, carnage and debris.

The tone of his statement and this outburst of tears were altogether out of keeping with joyful occasion. It was in the midst of a grand triumphal procession. He was mounted as a prince. A rejoicing multitude was with him, crowding his way. Men were strewing his path with green branches and laying down their garments for him to ride upon. Multitudes going before and multitudes following after were making the hillsides ring with loud and prolonged hosannas to him as the son of David and the long-expected Prince of Peace. Even though the multitude shouted until the heavens reverberated with their joyous acclaim, the man of sorrows paused to weep.

Tears are no strange thing in our world. Since the day that Adam went weeping from Eden, the earth has never ceased to be a vale of tears. Abraham and Isaac and Joseph wept. When David fled from the rebellion of Absalom, he went up the Mount of Olives and wept as he went. Hezekiah and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezra and Nehemiah all wept. Peter and Paul wept. According to Homer, Achilles and Ulysses wept. History

tells that Alexander and Caesar and Cato and Brutus and Napoleon all wept. And there be few men that have ever lived, however great or small, who have never wept.

But here we have an instance of an outburst altogether peculiar and especially remarkable. Here was a man, the most exalted in his nature that ever walked in human flesh, a divine man, a God-man, the only begotten of eternal deity, whose voice stilled the tempest and raised the dead, whose touch had healed the leper, given sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb – suddenly deluged with a flood of tears.

What was the cause and meaning of such an outburst from such a great person at such a time? Knowing that he was on his march of death and knowing what was about to happen to him in the city, we might suppose that he was thus affected in anticipation of what he was presently to endure. Was it then the foresight of what was to come to him: the treachery of Judas, the mock trial, the raising of three crosses, the writhing in agony and finally, death?

It is true that Jesus thought about these things, but these were not the reason for his sobs and tears, for behind the vision of his own approaching death, he saw the day when those thronging streets would be piled with dead, those proud buildings wrapped in flames, those sacred places resounding with curses, that holy temple leveled with the ground, the Roman eagles perched upon those walls, the Holy of Holies abandoned by its God, the city of David reduced to a field of blackened ruins, and its myriad population among the unpardoned dead or scattered to the four winds. Yes, this was the sorrowful contemplation that caused these tears.

But we must not suppose that it was only the physical destruction of the Jewish capital or the enslavement of their race for which Jesus wept. It was their spiritual ruin

and eternal doom that moved him most of all. The ignominious crime that they were about to commit in crucifying their own Messiah was the gruesome spectacle that testified to the national rejection of the one who had come to be their king. For their good he had come into the world and not for theirs only. It was his compassion for the whole race that brought him from above, that we by his poverty might become rich.

It was this more than anything else that accounts for the miracles he wrought. He could not see the blind and the lame, the fever-stricken and the lepers without giving to them the restoring grace it was in his power to give. He could not see mourning parents and weeping sisters without healing the heart wounds he was able to cure. It was no wonder that men were drawn to trust and love this Son of Man, whose step was always stopped by a human cry, to whose compassion no stricken man or woman ever appealed in vain. It is this feature of his character that makes him so dear to us now as our divine friend. For in this world where sorrow treads so fast on the heels of joy and where human comforters so often fail us, of what priceless value it is to have in that ever present one a never failing friend.

Never had a people been so abundantly blessed. For more than three years the Prince of Peace had walked her streets and taught in her synagogues. But they considered it not. They drove him from their homes, called him a devil, and finally stained their garments with his innocent blood. Jesus did not weep because of the maltreatment heaped upon him, but for the consequence of their ill-fated rejection upon their own heads. The disaster that followed Jerusalem's rejection of Jesus Christ has been an oft-repeated drama for the past two thousand years. Myriads since, like Jerusalem of old, have learned the sad lesson too late that:

There is a time we know not when  
A point we not where  
That marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.

These tears of Jesus were awfully foreboding tears. Men of great minds do not weep for trifles; and the great and glorious Christ would not have been so deeply moved but for something extremely sad and painful. It was no doubt his keen awareness of the dreadful hopelessness and despair of a soul that sins away his day of grace. There is something infinitely pitiable in the loss of a human soul. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God alone can understand the depth of that despair and fathom the misery of eternal woe. Therefore, the expression of these tears of Jesus reveals the unfathomed depths of God's love and shows how much he was willing to pay to save men from that deep, dark, and unspeakable calamity of being forever shut out from the divine favor of God.

The sweet undertones that come from these tears is the brightest ray of hope that ever broke upon the horizon of this old sin-darkened world. They tell us that Jesus cares for us. They preach of his profound regard for our welfare, of his deep anxiety to have us accept his merciful visitations, and of his unspeakable sorrow for those who reject his saving grace. The words in verse 42, "this thy day," tells us that there comes a time in the history of souls, and it may come in any period of life, when the powers of the world to come are most strongly felt, when God's nearness is most vividly realized, when the claims of Christ most forcibly touch and move the soul, when the kingdom of God is very near and its gates seem to stand wide open, a time when the stars in their courses move down to earth to lift the sinner to the heights of glory. But there comes a time when those days of flood tide pass and all is lost.

How wise and well for men to know the time of their visitation, to recognize their great and priceless opportunity, and to flee to the seeking Savior “swift as the morning light” lest the golden chance be gone and the gates of opportunity be forever closed.

Happy is he who learns ere hope is gone that  
The conscience may be still at ease  
The spirit light and gay  
That which is pleasing still may please  
And care be thrust away.

But on that forehead God has set  
Indelibly a mark  
Unseen by man, for man as yet  
Is blind and in the dark.

And though the doomed man’s path below  
May bloom as Eden bloomed  
He did not, does not, will not know  
Or feel that he is doomed.

He knows, he feels that all is well  
And every fear is calmed  
He lives, he dies, he sinks in hell  
Not only doomed, but damned.

Oh, where is this mysterious bourne  
By which our path is crossed  
Beyond which God himself hath sworn  
That he goes is lost.