

## Highways To Happiness

more time than our parents had, shouldn't we? We do have more time, but more time for what? We are much better off, but we certainly are no better. Far from it!

If some of you who read these lines live off the beaten path and do not have all the modern conveniences, take some comfort in the thought that you still have just as much time for life's worth-while things as the people of the city have.

Strange to say, with all our conveniences and our extra time, we do not have time for the necessary things. We are too busy to go to church, at least some of us are, or to worship in our homes. We do not have time to be neighborly. We cannot crowd in a few minutes a day for Bible study. We are too busy to take spiritual food or to thank God for His blessings, too busy to live and too busy to get ready to die.

We save time in so many ways. Trips that required days with the horse and buggy can now be made in as many hours by car. If we are in an extra rush, we can fly to our destination at the speed of hundreds of miles an hour. We get there sooner and get back, and then do not know what to do with the time we have saved.

If we used profitably all the time saved by our modern conveniences, we would be a better people. No doubt about it, we have a great deal more time, but more time for what?

Have you ever stopped to think why for nearly six thousand years men went on in the same old rut, doing things precisely as their fathers before them had done, and then suddenly in one brief century the whole life of mankind was revolutionized by the increase of knowledge and by the multitude of miraculous inventions?

In Daniel 12: 4, the Lord foretold the remarkable increase of knowledge and the speed of our time. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." If we believe the Bible, surely we can come to no other conclusion but that this prophecy is fulfilled in our day. And if so, we must be living in the "time of the end." Of course, the "time of the end" does not mean the end of time, but I believe God intended for this unusual time to impress upon our hearts the fact that we are nearing the end of time, that Jesus Christ is coming back to the world to set up His kingdom.

The disciples were just as curious as you and I would be, and they asked Him when these things would be.

Jesus answered them in that wonderful twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, in which He tells of the troubles and confusion that will precede His coming again. One of the definite things He asked them to remember was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel. The second chapter of Daniel presents an outline of world history, and an understanding of its events will help us to realize where we are in the stream of time in relation to what the disciples called "the end of the world." What does it mean for you and me to face the future in these stirring times?

## 28. A Look Into the Future

ONE MORNING about six-thirty I was awakened from a very sound sleep by a terrific explosion, which rocked the house and shook the bed. I was sure something dreadful had happened not far away. Jumping to my feet, I looked out the window, and about two blocks away I could see a cloud of dust rising over the trees. Hurriedly dressing I made my way in the direction of the commotion. I noticed a group of people some of them in bathrobes and dressing gowns. Ambulances and fire department apparatus were arriving with screeching sirens. As I passed buildings across the street I noticed that the plate glass had been blown out. Birds that had been sleeping in trees nearby were dead on the ground. The trees were stripped of all their leaves.

There had been an explosion in a dwelling, and the house was badly wrecked. It was found later that someone with a grudge against the occupants had planted several sticks of dynamite in the basement. Fortunately no one was killed, but several who were sleeping in the place were taken to the hospital for treatment.

In this house lived a psychic reader, a fortune-teller. In the back and also at the front of the house were large signs giving Professor Blank's office hours. For a fee he was willing, yes, he professed to be

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able, to tell his clients what would happen to them tomorrow, next month, or next year. But he did not seem to know anything about the explosion that was to wreck his house.

A good many people long for a look into the future, to know what will happen to them or to others. That is why millions of dollars are spent each year by honest but inquisitive souls who are trying to find out what lies ahead. That is why fortune-tellers, soothsayers, and astrologers are busy. I really think that it is a good thing we do not know what tomorrow, next week, or the coming years will bring to us.

God knew that it would not be best for you and me to know all the experiences that will come to us. "Into each life some rain must fall," the poet tells us. Few of us get through this world without trouble and disappointment. Of course, we have found out, too, that most of our troubles were not so bad as we expected they would prove to be. If we knew all the disappointments and difficulties ahead, some of us would worry ourselves into the hospital or the undertaker's establishment. One thing we do know, for God has promised, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." I Corinthians 10: 13.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children," we are told in Deuteronomy 29:29. The Lord has told us all we need to know about tomorrow. Through His prophets He has given us glimpses into the future. The rise and fall of nations right down to the end of time was revealed to Daniel and to other prophets. It is a most interesting story. The history of our world from the days of old Babylon down past our own day is revealed in the second and the seventh chapters of the Book of Daniel. The second chapter tells of a dream King Nebuchadnezzar had and of its meaning.

He was the proud, haughty ruler of old Babylon, and believed that the whole world was at his feet, and that he and his heirs would rule for ever.

One night he had an unusual dream; and when morning came, try as he might, he could not recall the details. It troubled him so much that he called together all his soothsayers, his fortune-tellers, his astrologers, his wise men. I imagine he may have said to them, "Men, I had an unusual dream last night. It was most impressive. It awakened me, and afterward I could not sleep. It troubles me now. I do not remember a single detail of it. It was no ordinary dream, and it must have a meaning. I want you to tell me the dream and what it means."

They had never had a command like this. It was unreasonable. They pretended to be able to foretell the future, to have unusual wisdom, and many times they had given the king counsel. Now they were confused. He wanted them to recall for him the dream he had forgotten.

These attendants of the king had been sailing under false colors, pretending to have ability to reveal secrets, to foretell the future. They passed as supermen. They often gave counsel or advice which would be right whatever the outcome. For instance, on one occasion a king inquired of them whether he should go to war with another nation. Their reply was, "A great nation will be defeated." Which ever way the tide of battle ebbed their prophecy would be safe.

Here was a test of their ability. "Show the dream, and the interpretation thereof," the king demanded. He went even further than that by saying, "If you will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill."

They begged and pleaded with the king to tell them the dream, assuring him that they could then tell him with certainty the meaning.

He was disgusted with them, and expressed his feeling in these words: "You have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me the interpretation."

In desperation they pleaded, "There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requires, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." They really spoke the truth this time. No one but God could tell what would happen in the days to come.

True as their statement was, it did not make the king feel any better. They had deceived him too many times, and he would have no more of it. The Bible record says that he was "furious," and issued a command that every wise man in Babylon should be slain. Among the king's wise men was a God-fearing young man who had been taken as a captive from Jerusalem. When the word came to this young man, Daniel, that his life was to be taken, he asked why the king had been so hasty in the matter. He requested

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that time be given them, so he and his companions might call on God to reveal this matter to them. Time was granted, and Daniel and his three young companions prayed to God, asking that the dream might be revealed to them.

God never neglects His children in time of need. He did reveal to these young men the king's dream and the meaning, or interpretation, also. Daniel did not forget to thank God for His help, as we are so prone to do. He said, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: and He changes the times and the seasons: He removes kings, and sets up kings. He gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He reveals the deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers."

Daniel went in confidently before Nebuchadnezzar, and when the king asked whether he could tell the dream and its meaning, the young man without any hesitation declared emphatically, "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king. But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

Daniel assured the king that he had no wisdom above his fellows. God had answered his prayers, and had given him the dream and its meaning. Here was an opportunity for Daniel to glorify himself.

I imagine the king was a bit nervous. He was anxious to know the dream and its meaning, so Daniel began at once. He outlined to the king a brief history of our world, the rise and fall of nations, and the conquests of one country over another. He did not stop with Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom but told of other kingdoms that would arise and of the course of empires and governments right down to the dropping of the curtain on the drama of our world. Most of this prophecy, we find, has been fulfilled, just as Daniel outlined it. The study of this Book of Daniel and also of the last book of the Bible, Revelation, has given me the fullest confidence in the Bible as God's Book, and of His direction and guidance in the affairs of men and nations.

You, too, are perhaps anxious to know what Daniel told the king. He told of his time, of our days in which we live, and of years yet to come. At the time of World War II students of prophecy, and of the second chapter of Daniel in particular, knew full well that neither Hitler nor any other individual would ever succeed in setting up a world kingdom. The Bible plainly declares that it will never be.

Try to imagine the king Nebuchadnezzar robed in all his regal splendor, with every muscle taut, his attention intently focused on the young Daniel, that he might not miss a word.

Daniel begins, "Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great image." No doubt the king's eyes opened a bit wider. Yes, that was right. He had seen an image in his dream. He was an idolater, a worshipper of the gods of the Chaldeans, and he was interested in images. Daniel went on, "This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces." Daniel put no if or but into his declaration. He was positive about it, and he knew by the expression on the king's face that he was telling the dream correctly. No doubt the monarch stopped him a few times to exclaim, "That is exactly right, young man!"

Daniel continued to the end of the dream: "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. And the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

Nebuchadnezzar was naturally more interested in the meaning of this strange dream than in the dream itself. With what rapt attention he must have listened as young Daniel with an air of authority finished the interpretation!

In just a few sentences Daniel had outlined to the king the history of the world from the days of his kingdom down through succeeding kingdoms. Man has never been able to pack so much history into so few words. In eight Bible verses is told the whole story of our world. The touch of the divine, the finger of God, is in this record, this prophecy. We know this full well, for history tells us positively that this prophecy of Daniel's time has been fulfilled in the minutest details. Daniel said to the king, "Thou art this head of gold."

That statement pleased the king as he listened. He was a great ruler, and Babylon was a mighty empire. Practically the whole world was prostrate at his feet. It could quite fitly be called the golden

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kingdom.

If this had caused Nebuchadnezzar any elation, what was to follow would not sound quite so good to him, for it did not flatter him at all. "After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth!" Daniel 2: 39.

It may not have occurred to the king that his kingdom might be conquered, or come to an end. But Daniel told him that other kingdoms were to come. Nebuchadnezzar was not worried too much about it right then; and even in later years, when Cyrus laid siege to the city of Babylon, the Babylonians lost no sleep, and did little worrying, for they were confident that their city was impregnable. They had gathered inside the walls of the city enough food to supply them for decades. There were also many acres inside the walls, so that they might grow sufficient food for themselves indefinitely. From their high and sturdy walls they scoffed at Cyrus, and had ample reason for their feelings of security. The Medes and Persians had no implements of warfare to tear down their walls or to take the city. God had said, however, that enemies would take the city, and had even told how it would be done. In the seventh chapter of Daniel the prophet employed beasts to represent the same succession of world empires.

A very interesting prophecy concerning the taking of Babylon by Cyrus was made by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 45:1. "Thus said the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him. And I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two hinged gates. And the gates shall not be shut."

The river Euphrates ran through Babylon, passing under the walls on either side of the city. A wall of unusual height and thickness surrounded the metropolis, and for safety's sake the Babylonians had made walls on both sides of the river. Massive, two-hinged gates in these river walls were opened by day, so citizens could pass freely over the bridges connecting the parts of the city on each side of the river. At night these gates were closed. Cyrus knew of a coming festival in Babylon, and since he had no machines of war powerful enough to batter down the walls, he decided to use strategy. He knew that at the time of this festival the citizens would be given over to drunkenness, carousal, and dissipation, so he planned to enter the city at the height of their revelry. A large army of men were set to digging and dredging above the city, so as to turn the Euphrates from its course. On the night of the festival the river was turned from its usual bed, and the army of Cyrus marched down the muddy channel under the walls. As their leader expected, the reveling Babylonians had failed to close the river gates; and the invading soldiers marched in and surprised the garrison, taking the city without any difficulty.

It is remarkable how God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel that his kingdom would be overthrown, and perhaps still more remarkable, that He told Isaiah the prophet a hundred and fifty years before the event that Cyrus would take the city, entering through the two-hinged gates which would not be shut. Man guesses as to what lies ahead, but only God knows the future.

It is significant to note here that drunkenness and debauchery led to the downfall of Babylon. They went into their indulgent revels as subjects of the king of Babylon, but awoke to find themselves slaves to the king of Persia.

Daniel had more to tell the king. He declared positively that after the Medes and Persians there would be "another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken." Daniel 2: 39-42.

The Medes and Persians got into difficulty with the ambitious Alexander the Great who was now at the head of the armies of Greece. In a number of encounters the forces of the two nations met. Finally on the battlefield of Arbela, with Alexander's legions outnumbered twenty to one, the Persians were defeated, and Greece became the third universal empire represented in the image by the belly and thighs of brass.

The iron monarchy of Rome next took the leading place in world affairs. For a time the kingdom did have the strength of iron as mentioned in the dream, but weakness crept in, and it was later divided into ten independent kingdoms comparing to the ten toes of the image-Ostrogoths, Alemanni, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Suevi, Burgundians, Heruli, Anglo-Saxons, and Lombards. These became the nations of modern Europe-England, France, Germany, and so forth.

The Lord told Daniel that in the days of these kings the God of heaven would set up a kingdom. The image was to be smitten on the feet by a stone cut out without hands. We are living in the days of the

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ten toes of the image. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome have come and gone. Daniel said that God would set up His kingdom on this earth in the days of the ten toes. In other words, Christ is to return to this earth as He promised. No one knows the day or hour of His return, but God has given us many signs in the Bible telling when His coming is near.

It has been estimated that there were about fifty signs given in the Scriptures foretelling the coming of the Messiah as a babe in Bethlehem and the significance of His coming. But the generation in which we live has more than five times fifty signs showing the certainty, the manner, and the approximate time of His Second Coming. Several of the dozen or more great lines of prophecy have found startling fulfillment right in our own troubled times. Happy is he who heeds these reminders that God's Word is true and puts his full trust in the divine wisdom which makes its plan so clear to men.

## 29. More Signs

AN ATTORNEY appeared before the court and asked that a certain case be dismissed because it was impossible for his client to be present. The judge wanted to be sure that there was some good reason for dismissal, and asked the attorney whether he had just reason for making such an unusual request.

"Yes, your honor," the attorney replied. "I have several good reasons why my client cannot appear before the court. First of all, he is dead. The second reason, your honor -" Here the judge stopped him. "That is sufficient reason," he said.

In previous chapters we have given sufficient evidence that we are nearing the end of time, that Jesus is coming back to the earth again. But there are many more signs, of which we can briefly mention only a few.

One day on the Mount of Olives the disciples asked Jesus to tell them some of the signs of His coming and of the end of the world, and His response to their query is recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Book of Matthew. Here is a remarkable prophecy revealing the social and political events to take place as signs that His return is near.

In verse 7 He said, "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes, in divers places." The last century has witnessed the greatest wars of all time, two of them involving the whole world. Famines, pestilence, and earthquakes have been startlingly on the increase.

In the twenty-ninth verse He mentioned the darkening of the sun and the falling of the stars as signs of His return. We have but to consult historical records for the notable fulfillment of this prophecy.

The one outstanding Dark Day of history was May 19, 1780, and the great meteoric shower known as the falling of the stars took place on November 13, 1833. You will be interested in the contemporary account of these unusual happenings, or were they only happenings? They were foretold by Jesus, and they came as He predicted.

"Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, remembered that 'a very general opinion prevailed, that the day of judgment was at hand. The [Connecticut] House of Representatives, being unable to transact their business, adjourned,' but the Council lighted candles, preferring, as a member said, to be found at work if the judgment were approaching.'" -Bible Readings" (1949), page 311.

"The remarkable Dark Day of May 19, 1780, is described by Samuel Williams of Harvard. The professor relates that the obscuration approached with the clouds from the southwest 'between the hours of ten and eleven a.m., and continued until the middle of the next night,' varying in degree and duration in different localities. In some places 'persons could not see to read common print in the open air, for several hours,' although 'this was not generally the case.' 'Candles were lighted up in the houses;-the birds having sung their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent;-the fowls retired to roost;-the cocks were crowing all around, as at break of day;-objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance; and everything bore the appearance and gloom of night.' -Id. page 310.

Man could find no reason for such darkness. The only reason we can think of is that Jesus said that there would be a time of darkness in the last days. The falling of the stars was as unusual and unexplainable as the Dark Day. There were no known natural causes or reasons for such a meter shower. It was a sign hung in the heavens to tell mankind that the world was nearing the close of time. Prof. Denison