

latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." James 5: 1-8.

The picture thus drawn, both by Isaiah and James, fits the present day perfectly. Just now the whole world is torn asunder as a result of bitter strife between capital and labor. The cry of the laborer is heard throughout the whole earth. The demand for bread, for better living conditions, and for the luxuries of life is becoming more and more insistent on the part of the producer everywhere. Industry is paralysed through strikes and industrial strife of every kind. According to The New York Times of April 20, 1946:

"Work stoppages [in the U.S.A.] resulting from labor - management disputes in 1945 totaled 4,750, with 3,467,000 workers involved (about 12 per cent of all total employed wage-earners). A loss of 38,025,000 man-days resulted. While the United States was at war, there were 14,731 stoppages, in which 6,744,000 workers were involved. (Workers were counted separately each time if they participated in more than one stoppage.) The result was 36,301,000 man-days lost."

The public, caught between the upper and nether millstones of capital and labor, has become restless and impatient almost to the point of desperation. The entire situation is ominous. But over the din of the strife and turmoil may be heard the clear voice of the prophet. "Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." James 5: 8.

To the student of prophecy, this situation constitutes one more sign that Jesus is soon coming again; and this knowledge enables him to endure the strife patiently until Christ brings sweet release by establishing peace upon earth.

A Great Religious Revival

Isaiah predicted that there would be a great influx of people from all nations into the Lord's house (the church) in the last days.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Isa. 2: 2.

This indicates that as the time of Christ's coming approaches, the church is to take on popularity and prestige in all parts of the earth. "All nations shall flow unto it." It will be a universal movement toward Christianity.

This prediction may presage a union of the world's great Christian bodies, which will bring a mighty influx of men and women of all nations into the church. Thus, Christianity will become popular. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains."

But great care should be exercised in quickly drawing from this prediction the conclusion that these millions flowing into the church are true followers of the Christ. It is easy to follow a popular movement, even though it leads into the church. But being a Christian, is another thing.

Let us for a moment compare this prediction of Isaiah with one made by the Apostle Paul, when he took up the prophetic telescope and saw the conditions that would prevail in the last days:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents. Unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." 2 Tim. 3: 1-5.

But someone may say, How can both these prophecies be true? How can the church be exalted to the mountain tops, with the nations flowing into it, while at the same time formalism and worldliness prevail among those who profess Christianity? We answer: Isaiah's prophecy is not a converted world flowing into a loyal and righteous church, but a worldly, apostate church opening her arms to welcome those of the sinful world to her communion.

Popularity of the church has always been an indication of worldly conformity, not Christ likeness. There is no actual conflict between the predictions of Isaiah and Paul. Isaiah said that he saw the church expanding and developing rapidly on every side in the last days.

But Paul utters a warning: This increased membership and favorable standing on the part of the church will not make the world a safer place in which to live, but will greatly increase the peril surrounding those who truly desire to follow Christ. Nineteen terrible sins are catalogued as found in

the lives of those who have “a form of godliness.” The world and the church have become just alike. No distinction can be seen between her members and those who make no pretence of being Christians. They go through the religious forms, but the power of Christ to save from sin is denied and rejected. The church has become careless and worldly.

Here is a Bible pen picture of a popular, but decadent church. Religion has become a mockery and a cloak for sin. The members can drink, gamble, lie, steal, cheat flout the marriage vow and still remain in good and regular standing in the church. There is no resemblance to the Christ life in their lives. There is no passion for souls, no missionary zeal, no real searching after God.

This situation constitutes a grave peril. “Perilous times shall come.” And said Jesus, “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” Matt. 24:12. Even those who are true must beware lest by beholding sin in the lives of other professed followers of Christ they become changed.

We think it is not necessary to try to convince the reader that these prophecies find a complete and perfect fulfillment in the very conditions that surround us at this time. These are the days of which Isaiah and Paul spoke; therefore, these are “the last days.” The very spiritual decadence of present day Christianity is in itself a sign that the coming of Christ is near.

Without Natural Affection

One of the outstanding sins of the last days, as enumerated by Paul, is the loss of natural human affection. (2 Tim. 3: 3.) The “natural” order that God has ordained for men and women is that of monogamous marriage. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Gen. 2:24. This is one woman for one man so long as they both shall live.

But this order is rapidly being changed, until today the divorce courts are overburdened with the cases of those who are seeking the annulment of their marriage ties. Marriage is no longer considered a sacred relationship to be guarded and preserved. By many it is entered into carelessly and casually, and its bonds are broken without compunction. The San Francisco Chronicle of September, 1946, states:

“One American family broke up for every three-approximately -that were formed last year, the Federal Security Agency reported. More than 502,000 marriages ended in divorce courts in 1945, an all-time record representing a 25.5 per cent rise over the previous peak divorce year, 1944. The divorces were 31 per cent of the marriages, which totaled 1,618,331 last year, or about 8.7 per cent below Cupid's biggest year, 1942.

“The rate has gone steadily up since 1938, when 244,000 decrees were granted. Except for the depression years, the divorce curve in the United States has gone up virtually without interruption since the first estimate 77,062 -was made in 1906.”

“In Marriage for Moderns, Henry A. Bowman states that the divorce rate in 1870 was 1 to about 34 marriages. By 1900 it had risen to 1 to 12; in 1930 it stood at 1 to 6. Currently it may be 1 to 4, or higher. Probably the flood of “war divorces” will boost it much higher in the next couple of years, and experts predict that by 1960 or thereabouts (after the flood has subsided) the normal rate will be one divorce for every two marriages-with the trend line still pointing upwards.”- Francis Sill Wickware, Pageant, April, 1946, pages 5, 6.

Thus, God's order is being reversed. Conditions of our day again fulfil the prophetic outline. The breaking up of the home ties, the rush to the divorce courts, and the loss of proper regard for the vows of wedlock are “signs of the times” and among those that show that the time is rapidly approaching when Jesus must come and set all things right again.

Jesus Gave Signs

Jesus also gave several specific signs of His coming.

“Then said He unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.” Luke 2 1: 10, 11.

How accurately Jesus described the things that have happened in this and recent generations! The most destructive earthquakes on record have come during the last one and a half centuries. Some

of them are within the memory of those now living. One of the world's worst earthquakes dates back only to December, 1946. This took place in southern Japan just south of the city of Tokyo, which some years ago was almost entirely destroyed by another earthquake.

Famines and pestilence have followed in the wake of the great world wars to the extent that the loss of life by starvation and disease has in some countries exceeded that of the war.

The influenza epidemic came in the wake of World War I, taking the staggering toll of 20,000,000 lives. Never had the world been swept by such a plague before. One authority stated at the time that "through Europe, America, Asia, and Africa, this fatal pandemic held universal sway."

Sir Hall Caine, the famous novelist, wrote the year following the war: "As if the elements were not cruel enough, war itself creates diseases. Partly from the new conditions of warfare, and partly from its churning up the earth, full of human remains, the war of the last few years has apparently liberated innumerable diseases which are now sweeping through the world." -Hearst Magazine, January, 1919.

Pestilence follows wars, and famine follows pestilence. World War II brought the climax. The worst famine conditions in the history of man spread over many parts of the earth, taking a ghastly toll of human life that has been appalling. Millions of pounds worth of food and clothing have been hurried into the world's famine-stricken districts through various government and church agencies in an effort to save life. But despite all that organized relief on a world scale could accomplish, the toll from famine and pestilence has run into many millions.

Predicting unprecedented famine and suffering for China in 1950, the editor of The Hong Kong Telegraph published the following statement in the issue of September 13, 1949:

'Predicting for China in the coming year conditions of misery and disruption on an unprecedented scale, foreign experts on Chinese affairs lay particular stress on the prospect of a great famine which, in their opinion, may be far more acute than that which ravaged the country in 1931-32. During those years, hundreds of thousands perished from starvation, brought on by natural disasters as well as by the depredations of invading Japanese forces.

"Floods last year and this year in the Yangtze basin have drastically reduced the rice output in this normally most productive area; similarly, floods have greatly curtailed rice production in the south. Floods

and drought in Hopeh and other North China provinces have cut grain yields there as well. It must be remembered that, for decades, China has never grown enough food to feed herself. Since the end of the Pacific War, the shortage has been greater than ever. Despite government purchases, UNRRA, and other aid contributions, hunger has stalked the country from one end to the other. The civil war, spreading to more and more provinces, dislocating whole populations and interfering with normal productive activities, has made the situation much worse than it would otherwise have been. With the stoppage of foreign aid supplies, with the closure of ports to imports from abroad, and with inland transportation facilities-never at any time adequate or reliable-further reduced through war destruction and fuel shortages, the position is becoming grave in the extreme."

Distress of Nations

One of the outstanding signs mentioned by Jesus was that in the last days there would be:

"Distress of nations, with perplexity.... men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Luke 21: 25-27.

Again the picture is of our day! Were Jesus upon earth now, surely He could not portray twentieth-century conditions more accurately. Before the outbreak of World War II, Ramsay MacDonald, then premier of England, said: "The affairs of the nations have gotten beyond human control."

Some time before his death, H. G. Wells, the great English writer and historian, wrote in the following gloomy strain:

"Destruction is not threatening civilization; it is happening to civilization before our eyes. The ship of civilization is not going to sink in five years, nor in fifty years. It is sinking now.

When the present Duke of Windsor was Prince of Wales, he gave utterance to the following doleful words: "We have before us today a world sick with fearful doubt, weary with repeated disappointments. . . . And we see in almost every land widespread distress and perplexity."

All this was before the days of the atomic bomb. Already men's hearts were failing for fear; already the nations were distressed. But now they are in a state of shock.

As a result of their success in splitting the atom, men are now prepared to destroy whole nations—men, women, and children—in a few hours. Because of this mighty discovery, the nations of earth fear and quake. Even earth's rulers declare that the end of civilization is clearly in sight. Religious leaders of the popular churches are predicting doom within the next few years, and scientists and statesmen are foretelling the end of the race.

General George Marshall declared in his biennial report, published October 10, 1945, that the harnessing of atomic power has brought on a “new age, . . . that the possibilities of the future are terrifying.”

Later, President Truman warned that the “atomic bomb is too dangerous to be loose in a lawless world.”

But it is loose. Such bombs are being manufactured in quantity and stored for future use. In despair the editor of the *Christian Century* inquires:

“What does all this add up to? Is it not to the arrival in Europe of a new Dark Age, when the last controls exercised by an international order which has been disintegrating since 1914 are finally being destroyed? ... Here is a world in which terror is triumphant. Here is a world in which ruthlessness is the requirement of successful statecraft. In such a world, what can be ahead but misery and anguish; a reversion to the brute; a society in which trust is unknown and men's days are lived under a continual and corroding fear.”

It all adds up also to something else and very different. It means that the end is at hand, for Jesus declared:

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh.” “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Luke 21:28,27.

Signs in the Sun, Moon, and Stars

“And there shall be signs,” said Jesus, “in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.” Verse 25. “Tearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.” Verse 11.

just what was meant by this startling announcement was given in greater detail, when Jesus added:

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matt. 24: 29, 30.

The tribulation here mentioned is the 1260 - year period of persecution of the church foretold in Dan. 7:25. The period, of persecution was to be shortened a little in order that some of God's people should be spared; it would stop a little before the 1260 years ended. This is important. Actually the period of 1260 years of papal oppression here referred to ended in AD. 1798, but the persecution largely ceased some twenty five years earlier, about 1770-1775.

It was “immediately after the tribulation” of those days that the sign in the sun was to be seen. Mark quotes Jesus as saying: “In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.” Mark 13: 24.

On May 19, 1780, there occurred what has since been known as “the dark day.” The night following, the moon had the appearance of blood. Those who have recorded this phenomenon declare that the darkness was so dense that one could not discern even white objects. It could almost be felt. White paper was equally invisible with the blackest velvet.

“The Dark Day, May 19, 1780 - so called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England. In some places, persons could not see to read common print in the open air for several hours together. Birds sang their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; fowls went to roost; cattle sought the barnyard; and candles were lighted in the houses. The obscuration began about ten o'clock in the morning, and continued till the middle of the next night, but

with differences of degrees and duration in different places. For several days previous, the wind had been variable, but chiefly from the south west and the north-east. The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known." - Noah Webster's Dictionary (edition 1869).

"The dark day of New England, so familiar to old and young, came May 19, 1780.... Near eleven o'clock, it began to grow dark, as if night were coming. Men ceased their work; the lowing cattle came to the barns, the bleating sheep huddled by the fences, the wild birds screamed and flew to their nests, the fowls went to their roosts. ... At night it was so inky dark that a person could not see his hand when held up, nor even a white sheet of paper." - History of Weare, New Hampshire, 1735-1888. (Boston Public Library.)

It came at the right time to constitute a sign of the coming of Jesus and to fulfil His word.

"And the stars shall fall from heaven."

On November 12-13, 1833, on the American continent, this prediction was also fulfilled in the mighty celestial display of falling stars such as had never before been witnessed by man.

Of the American display, we are told: 'From the Gulf of Mexico to Halifax, until daylight with some difficulty put an end to the display, the sky was scored in every direction with shining tracks and illuminated with majestic fireballs.' Agnes M. Clerke, "History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century," page 328.

"The morning of November 13, 1833, was rendered memorable by an exhibition of the phenomenon called shooting stars, which was probably more extensive and magnificent than any similar one hitherto recorded. . . . Probably no celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with so much admiration and delight by one class of spectators, or with so much astonishment and fear by another class. For some time after the occurrence, the 'meteoric phenomenon' was the principal topic of conversation in every circle."- Denison Olmsted, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in Yale College, in the American journal of Science and Arts, Vol. XW (1834), pages 363, 364.

"I witnessed this gorgeous spectacle, and was awe-struck. The air seemed filled with bright descending messengers from the sky. It was about daybreak when I saw this sublime scene. It was not without the suggestion at that moment that it might be the harbinger of the coming of the Son of man; and in my state of mind I was prepared to hail Him as my friend and deliverer. I had read that the 'stars shall fall from heaven,' and they were now falling. I was suffering much in my mind. . . . I was beginning to look away to heaven for the rest denied me on earth." -Frederick A. Douglass, "My Bondage and My Freedom," page 186.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory." This is the next great act in the drama.

We have seen His signs; we are seeing them today. They are everywhere in evidence. We cannot possibly be mistaken. The return of Jesus is at the door, and our chief consideration in life should be to prepare to meet Him.

"And He spoke to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, you see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise you, when you see these things come to pass, know you that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke 21: 29-31.

If you could know that Jesus would appear
Before another morn should give its light,
Oh, would your heart be filled with joy or fear,
If you could know that He would come tonight?

The things 'you'd do, the words that you would say,
Perchance the letter you had thought to write,
How many plans would have to change today
If you were sure that Christ would come tonight?

How many acts would then remain undone?

How many wrongs would have to be made right,
If you should meet Him ere another sun,
And knew for sure that He would come tonight?

How many things would you find time for then,
Now crowded out or else forgotten quite
The kindly deed, the hour of prayer again
Would aught be different, should He come tonight?

Some day that dawns will make all time as past;
Then may we keep our lamps all trimmed and bright.
Oh, may we live each day as were the last,
And ready be if Christ should come tonight!
PEARL WAGGONER HOWARD.