

Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy

Though weakest of them all;
Nor can I bear the piercing thought,
To have my worthless name left out,
When Thou for them shall call.”

“Prevent, prevent it by Thy grace!
Be Thou, dear Lord, my hiding place in that expected day.
Thy pardoning voice, O let me hear,
To still each unbelieving fear,
Nor let me fall, I pray.”

One night, at a royal ball, the Prince of Wales asked a titled lady where the Countess of Huntingdon was. “Oh, I suppose she is praying with some of her beggars somewhere!” was the flippant answer. “Ah,” said the crown prince, “in the last day I think I should be glad to hold the hem of Lady Huntingdon's mantle.” True it is that the greatest gift of grace now, as it will be then, is to be numbered among the obedient children of God.

“Let me among Thy saints be found,
Whenever the Archangel's trump shall sound, To see Thy smiling face;
Then joyfully Thy praise I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring with shouts of endless grace.”

5. SIGNS OF THE APPROACHING END

CHRIST had spoken of the coming desolation of the sacred temple at Jerusalem. The disciples were astonished. “Master, see,” said one, “what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” The Savior replied: “See thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Mark 13: 2.

“What Shall be the Sign?”

As soon as they were alone on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city, the disciples came to Jesus, saying: “Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Matthew 24:3.

Replying to this question, the Savior spoke first of the fall of Jerusalem; He foretold in a sentence the experiences of His church through dark ages to follow. Then He described the events of the latter days, the signs showing His Second Advent near at hand; and, finally, He pictured the scenes of His own glorious appearing in the clouds of heaven. The fullest record of the discourse is found in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew.

A Striking Parallel

The first portion of the prophetic discourse (verses 4-14) deals with general conditions that were to prevail both in the last days of the Jewish state, and on a yet larger scale in the course of history leading to the last days of the world. There was so close a parallel between these times that Christ, in one description, answered both questions asked, When shall these things come upon Jerusalem? And, What shall be the signs of the end of the world?

The prophetic word foretold the rise of false Christs, the coming of wars, famines, and earthquakes in “divers places.” The believers saw these things fulfilled in that generation before Jerusalem fell; but as we read the prophecy, we see the wider application and yet larger fulfillment through the course of history since that day, these calamities increasing in the earth as the end draws near. Before the end of

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the Jewish state, the believers carried the gospel to all the known world of their day. (See Colossians 1:23) In these latter days we are seeing the yet wider proclamation of the gospel, as foretold in the fourteenth verse, “ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

The Last Days of Jerusalem

We may note briefly some of the events of Jerusalem's last days. Christ had forewarned the believers: “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” Having rejected the true Christ, the nation was open to deception by the false. We catch just a glimpse of the fulfillment in the book of Acts; in secular history the full story is told. Ridpath says:

“Never was a people so turbulent, so excited with expectation of a deliverer who should restore the ancient kingdom, so fired with bigotry and fanaticism, as were the wretched Jews of this period. One Christ came after another. Revolt was succeeded by revolt, instigated by some pseudo-prophet or pretended king.” – “History of the World,” Volume 1, page 849 (Part 3, chapter 19).

During the Savior's life and ministry a divine hand had to a great extent held the elements of violence in check, but as the light was rejected more and more, the spirit of evil came to hold sway unrestrained. Dr. Mears well describes the changed conditions in these words:

“The narrative of the evangelists presents a tranquil scene, a succession of attractive pictures, in striking contrast to the bloody and tumultuous events which crowd each other in the pages of Josephus.” – “From Exile to Overthrow,” pages 256, 257. Thus the events led rapidly on toward the day of Jerusalem's fall, so long foretold by the prophets.

The Sign to the Believers

The disciples had asked for a sign, and Christ gave them a token by which they might know when the time to flee from Jerusalem had come. Here Luke's Gospel gives the fullest record: “When you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judah flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter there into. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” Luke 21: 20-22.

The unbelieving in Jerusalem and Judah could not conceive that their city, so long protected and favored of God, could be destroyed. Not even the appearance of the Roman armies could shake their blind self-confidence. But at the first sight of the encircling armies, the Christians knew that the time for flight was at hand. But how to flee was the question, with the compassing lines drawn close about the city. Moreover, the Zealots, the furious war party in power, would be little likely to allow any number to pass out to the Roman forces.

Just here God's providence made a way of escape. Cestius, the Roman commander, after having partially undermined one of the temple walls, suddenly decided to defer pushing the attack. “He retired from the city,” says Josephus, “without any reason in the world.” (See “Wars,” book 2, chap. 19.) And the Zealots flew out after the retiring Romans, furiously attacking the rear guards. Then those watching Christians knew that the time for quick flight had come, according to Christ's prophecy uttered many years before. They fled out of the city and out of the country round about.

Through all the years, Christ's prophecy had exhorted them, “Pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.” Matthew 24: 20. The prayer was answered, for it was in the autumn and on a week day that the flight was made. Watching for the sign and instantly obeying, they were delivered.

Thus it was that when the Romans returned later to the siege, never to give up till the city fell, none of the Christians were overwhelmed in its destruction. Even so are we to watch the, signs of our own times, that we may escape those things that are coming upon the earth, and be ready to “stand before the Son of man.”

It was in autumn that the army of Cestius closed in upon Jerusalem. According to the careful record of Graetz, the Jewish historian, It was evidently on a Wednesday that the Roman army retired,

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pursued by all the forces of the city. This was the Instant for the flight of the Christians. Next day the Zealots, shouting exultant war songs, returned to Jerusalem (8th October).” – “History of the Jews,” Volume II, page 268. The day before was the time for unhindered flight.

The Prophetic Word Fulfilled

Christ had declared that the temple, the pride of the nation, would be utterly destroyed. In the last siege, the Roman commander tried to spare the magnificent pile. When the Jews made it their chief fortress, because of its massive strength, Titus remonstrated with them, saying: “If you will but change the place whereon you fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it. Nay, I will endeavor to preserve you your holy house, whether you will or not.” - Josephus, “Wars of the Jews,” book 6, chapter 2.

But the prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. The people seemed possessed with fury. The hardened Roman pagans were astonished at their suicidal rashness. Titus's efforts to save the temple failed, and it went down in ruin, as Christ had foretold. The disciples of Christ had called His attention to the immense blocks of stone that composed the temple walls. “See, what manner of stones,” one said. When Titus examined these same stones, after the fall of the city, he is said to have declared:

“We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications.” - Id., book 6, chapter 9. Rather, we would say, in the light of Scripture teaching, the destruction that came upon the city was but the fruit of its own way. God's guardian care had long protected the city of David. When His protection was finally thrust aside and the people put themselves in the power of the great destroyer, divine justice could no longer save the city from the judgments that were bound to fall upon persistent transgression against light.

The lesson is one of those written “for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.” Jerusalem, in that generation of great light and high privilege, fell because it knew not the time of its visitation. Still Christ's sad lament bears its warning to the ears of men: “If thou had known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!” Luke 19:42.

Having foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and given to the believers signs by which they might find deliverance in the day of its overthrow, Christ yet more fully answered the second part of the disciples' question, “What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Matthew 24:3.

Apollonius, the friend and counselor of Titus, left a similar testimony to the latter's conviction that there was something supernatural about the forces of destruction let loose upon Jerusalem. “After Titus had taken Jerusalem, and when the country all round was filled with corpses, the neighboring races offered him a crown. But he disclaimed any such honor to himself, saying that it was not he himself that had accomplished this exploit, but that he had merely lent his arms to God, who had so manifested His wrath.” - Philostratus, “Life of Apollonius”, book 6, chapter 29.

The Period of Tribulation

Quickly He passed to the events of the latter days. But first He sketched, in a few words, the tribulations through which His church was to pass during the intervening centuries. Daniel the prophet had written of this experience, foretelling the long period during which the papal power was to “wear out the saints of the Most High.” Daniel 7:25. Of these times, Christ said in His prophetic discourse:

“Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.” Matthew 24: 21, 22.

It is evident that Christ referred to the time of tribulation foretold by Daniel, not to the trials attending the flight of the Christians from Jerusalem, for their flight was a deliverance of the elect from trial. However much the weak may have suffered temporarily in fleeing from their homes, the great suffering of that time came upon the unbelieving, who had no shelter.

This prophecy given by our Savior presents the picture of a long-continued persecution of His own elect, and foretells the shortening of the allotted time. God was to intervene in some special way to save His people. And it was even so. The elect did suffer all through the centuries of intolerance, until the rise of the Reformation and the spreading abroad of God's Word broke the power of ecclesiasticism, thus

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shortening the days of bitter tribulation.

The End Drawing Near

According to Daniel's further prophecy, the period of trial and persecution was to reach "even to the time of the end." Daniel 11: 35. Naturally, then, we should look for the signs of the latter days to begin to appear following these days of tribulation. And so we find the next words of Christ's discourse introducing the topic of His Second Coming. From now on the prophetic outline deals with events leading down to the end of the age.

First the Savior utters a warning against false ideas concerning His Second Coming. That no theories of a secret coming or of a mystic coming might deceive the unwary, He says in plain words:

"If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24: 23-27.

Today we see the need of this warning. Some of the most subtle deceptions are found in the teaching that Christ has already come, secretly, or that He comes in the chamber of death, or in the spiritualistic séance. Against all these errors we are forewarned, as well as against any agencies that may come showing marvelous signs and wonders. The close of human probation, the coming of the day of God, will be as a thief in the night; and Christ's coming itself will overtake the unwatchful all unprepared. Nevertheless, when He comes, "every eye shall see Him," and all the glory of heaven will burst upon a quaking world.

Signs in the Heavens and the Earth

Now the Savior's outline of prophecy presents the signs which were to show when the coming of the Lord was near. Referring again to the days of tribulation foretold by the prophet Daniel, Christ says: "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." Matthew 24: 29, 30. In Luke's record of the same prophetic discourse, additional signs are given, describing conditions in the earth as Christ's coming draws near. His account reads:

"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring. 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. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh." Luke 21: 25-28.

Yet again, the prophet John, in the Revelation, foretells these signs in the sun and moon and stars, as they were presented to him in a vision of the last days. But his record shows that this series of signs was to be preceded by a great earthquake. He describes the order of events as follows: "I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Revelation 6: 12, 13.

In these scriptures four great signs of Christ's approaching advent are listed for our study, as follows:

1. The great earthquake.
2. The darkening of the sun and moon.
3. The falling of the stars.
4. Distress of nations, and other signs.

The Time When the Signs Begin

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Christ's prophecy points out approximately the time when the first of the signs that He gave, the darkening of the sun, should appear, "immediately after the tribulation of those days." And the "great earthquake" of John's vision was to precede this sign in the heavens. The Reformation of the sixteenth century began to cut short the days of tribulation; but some countries shut out the liberalizing influences of the Word of God, and there the persecution continued.

Even as late as near the end of the seventeenth century, in 1685, France revoked the Edict of Nantes, that had granted toleration, and persecution raged as of old. The church was driven again to the desert. Speaking of the early decades of the eighteenth century, Kurtz says: "In France the persecution of the Huguenots continued.... The 'pastors of the desert' performed their duties at the risk of their lives." - "Church History," Volume 3, page 88.

There was severe persecution of the Moravians in Austria, in these times, many of the persecuted finding refuge in Saxony. It was in 1722 that Christian David led the first band of Moravian refugees to settle on the estates of Count Zinzendorf, who organized through them the great pioneer movement of modern missions. But by the middle of the century, the era of enlightenment and the force of world opinion, in the good providence of God, had so permeated the Catholic states of Europe that general violent persecution had ceased. One incident will suffice as evidence of this.

The scene was in France, where alone, of all the Catholic states, there were any great numbers of Protestants. In 1762 a Huguenot of Toulouse, unjustly charged with crime, was put to torture and to death, under the pressure of the old persecuting spirit. Many Huguenots thought the persecutions of former times were reviving, and prepared to flee to Switzerland. But Voltaire took up the matter, and so wrought upon public opinion that the Paris parliament reviewed the case, and the king paid the man's family a large indemnity.

This shows that by the middle of that century the days of any general persecution had ceased. In the nature of the case, we may not point to the exact year and say, Here the days of tribulation ended. From these times, then, we are to scan the record of history to learn if the appointed signs began to appear. As we look, we find the events recorded, following on in the order predicted:

1. The Lisbon earthquake, of 1755.
2. The dark day, of 1780.
3. The falling stars, of 1833.
4. General conditions and movements betokening the end.

"There shall be signs," the Savior said. We are to study the record of events, watching to catch the signs of the approaching end as earnestly as the mariner watches the beacon lights when he nears the longed-for haven on a dark and stormy night.

6. THE LISBON EARTHQUAKE OF 1755

"Lo, There Was a Great Earthquake"

THE first of a series of signs of the approaching end is thus described by the revelator: "I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake." Revelation 6:12. The verses immediately preceding this scripture plainly describe the days of persecution of the saints of God, and the era of protest and reform that cut short that time of tribulation. Then this first sign appears. This is in harmony with Christ's statement that the signs of His Second Coming should begin to appear following the tribulation of those days.

Just about the close of the days of tribulation occurred the Lisbon earthquake, as it is called, though its effects reached far beyond Portugal. Prof. W. H. Hobbs, geologist, says of it: "Among the earth movements which in historic times have affected the kingdom of Portugal, that of November 1, 1755, takes first rank, as it does, also, in some respects, among all recorded earthquakes.... In six minutes sixty thousand people perished." Earthquakes," pp. 142, 143. "Lo, there was a great earthquake," the revelator said. It was indeed "a great earthquake," and great was its influence. In all the world, men's hearts were mightily stirred. James Parton, an English author, says of it:

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“The Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, appears to have put both the theologians and philosophers on the defensive. At twenty minutes to ten that morning, Lisbon was firm and magnificent, on one of the most picturesque and commanding sites in the world, a city of superb approach, placed precisely where every circumstance had concurred to say to the founders, Build here! In six minutes the city was m rums. Half the world felt the convulsion. For many weeks, as we see in the letters and memoirs of that time, people in distant parts of Europe went to bed in alarm, relieved in the morning to find that they had escaped the fate of Lisbon one night more.” *Life of Voltaire*,” Volume 2, pages 208, 209.

The World Set to Thinking

This earthquake set men to thinking of the great day of God. Voltaire, the French philosopher, was “profoundly moved” by it, we are told. “It was the last judgment for that region,” he wrote; “nothing was wanting to it except the trumpet.” More than a month afterward, while still the perturbations of the earth were continuing, this skeptic wrote a poem upon the problem presented, voicing the sentiment:

“My heart oppressed demands Aid of the God who formed me with his hands. Sons of the God supreme to suffer all Fated alike, we on our Father call. Sad is the present if no future state, No blissful retribution mortals wait, If fate's decrees the thinking being doom to lose existence in the silent tomb. All may be well; that hope can man sustain. All now is well; this an illusion vain. The sages held me forth delusive light, Divine instructions only can be right. Humbly I sigh, submissive suffer pain, Nor more the ways of Providence arraign.” - “Poem on the Destruction of Lisbon,” Smollet's translation; *Works*, Volume 33, edition 1761.

Just at the time, plans were under way for the opening of a theater at Lausanne for the special performance of some of Voltaire's rationalistic dramas. But the enterprise was deferred. One writer says:

“The earthquake had made all men thoughtful. They mistrusted their love of the drama, and filled the churches instead.” - Tallentyre, “*Life of Voltaire*,” p. 319. So, in an age of rationalism and unbelief, men's thoughts were turned toward God, and human helplessness and earth's instability were recognized.

Extent of the Lisbon Earthquake

As to the extent of the earthquake, a writer of the period shows that it was felt in Sweden and in Africa and in the West Indies, adding: “The effects were distributed over very nearly four millions of square English miles of the earth's surface, and greatly surpassed anything of the kind ever recorded in history.” - “*History and Philosophy of Earthquakes*” (London, 1757), page 833.

The commander of an English ship, lying off Lisbon at the time, thus described the scene in a letter to the ship's owners: “Almost all the palaces and large churches were rent down, or part fallen, and scarce one house of this vast city is left habitable. Everybody that was not crushed to death ran out into the large places, and those near the river ran down to save themselves by boats, or any other floating convenience, running, crying, and calling to the ships for assistance. But whilst the multitude were gathered near the riverside, the water rose to such a height that it overflowed the lower part of the city, which so terrified the miserable and already dismayed inhabitants, who ran to and fro with dreadful cries, which we heard plainly on board, that it made them believe the dissolution of the world was at hand; every one falling on his knees and entreating the Almighty for His assistance. . . . By two o'clock the ships' boats began to ply, and took multitudes on board. . . . The fear, the sorrow, the cries and lamentations of the poor inhabitants are not expressible; every one begging pardon, and embracing each other, crying, Forgive me, friend, brother, sister! OM what will become of us! Neither water nor land will protect us, and the third element, fire, seems now to threaten our total destruction! As in effect it happened. The conflagration lasted a whole week.” - Thomas Hunter, “*Historical Account of Earthquakes*” (Liverpool, 1756), pp. 72-74.

Recognized as a Sign

Looking down through the ages, the prophet of the Revelation saw the coming of the latter days, when signs of the approaching end were to begin to appear. Just there he beheld “a great earthquake.” The

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terrible event was noted by inspiration as a sign of the coming of the final judgment. Earthquakes there had been before, and increasing earthquakes were to follow after, "earthquakes in divers places," - as Christ foretold, speaking of the signs of His Second Coming. But as befitted this first of the series of signs of the approaching end, a conviction from God seemed to come into the hearts of men in that generation, that this was indeed a token to remind the world of a coming day of doom.

In the year of the disaster, an English poet, John Biddolf, published a book of verse, pointing some of the lessons of the hour, from which we quote a few descriptive stanzas:

"Calm was the sky; the sun serenely bright
Shot over the sea long dazzling streams of light. Through
orange groves soft breathing breezes played
And gathered sweets like bees wherever they strayed. In fair
relief stood the lofty town, Set off by radiant lights and shadows brown."

"Ill fated city! There were revels kept. Devoid of fear, they ate, they drank, they slept. No friendly voice
like that of ancient Rome was sent to give them warning of their doom. No airy warriors to each other
clung, such as this said over destined Zion hung. But like a nightly thief their dreadful fate not looked for
came and undermined their state."

"Lo, what a sudden change! On ruin's brink. The proud turn humble, and the thoughtless think. Dark,
gloomy sadness over clouds the gay, and hypocrites for once sincerely pray."

"But let it not be thought their horrid deeds Had pulled this dreadful judgment on their heads, Or that for
crimes too horrible to tell, Like guilty Sodom, thunderstruck they fell."

"Who can with curious eyes this globe survey, And not behold it tottering with decay? All things created,
God's designs fulfil, And natural causes work His destined will. And that eternal Word, which cannot he,
To mortals hath revealed in prophecy That in these latter days such signs should come, Preludes and
prologues to the general doom. But not the Son of man can tell that day. Then, lest it find you sleeping,
watch and pray."

Thus this first of the predicted latter-day signs bore its message to men. Its immediate scene was set in the Old World, but its warning was world-wide. The next sign foretold was to appear in the New World, but like the Lisbon earthquake, its message of warning was for all men.

7. THE DARK DAY OF 1780

"The Sun Shall be Darkened"

WE recall that in the vision of latter-day signs given to the prophet John, he saw the "great earthquake" followed by a sign in the heavens: "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Revelation 6:12. Of this event our Savior spoke, in giving the signs of His Second Coming which were to begin to appear following the cutting short of the days of persecution. We repeat His words: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." Matthew 24: 29.

The Prophecy Fulfilled

True to the order of the prophecy, following the great earthquake of 1755 in Europe, there came, in America, the second sign of the approaching end, the wonderful darkening of the sun, known in history as "The Dark Day." This sign appeared at the time indicated in the prophecy, "immediately after the tribulation of those days;" or as Mark has it, "in those days, after that tribulation." On May 19, 1780, the sun was darkened, and the following night the moon did not give her light. Whatever explanation men may have to offer as to the cause of the phenomenon, the fact remains that when the time of the prophecy came,

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the sign appeared.

The first volume of the "Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences," published in Boston in 1785, contains a paper entitled, "An Account of a Very Uncommon Darkness in the States of New England, May 19, 1780. By Samuel Williams, A. M., Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy in the University at Cambridge [Massachusetts]."

Of the extent, duration, and degree of darkness on that occasion, this scientific observer said:

"The extent of this darkness was very remarkable.... From the accounts that have been received, it seems to have extended all over the New England States. It was observed as far east as Falmouth [Portland, Maine]. To the westward, we hear of its reaching to the furthest parts of Connecticut, and Albany. To the southward, it was observed all along the seacoasts. And to the north as far as our settlements extend...."

"With regard to its duration, it continued in this place at least fourteen hours: but it is probable this was not exactly the same in different parts of the country. The appearance and effects. were such as tended to make the prospect extremely dull and gloomy. 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." (See pages 234-246)

Whittier has commemorated it in the poem, "Abraham Davenport:

"It was on a May day of the far old year Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell Over the bloom and sweet life of the spring, Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon, A horror of great darkness."

"Birds ceased to sing, and all the barnyard fowls Roosted; the cattle at the pasture bars lowed, and looked homeward; bats on leather wings Flitted abroad. The sounds of labor died. Men prayed, and women wept; all ears grew sharp To hear the doom blast of the trumpet shatter The black sky."

The words of the poet are substantiated by the plain prose of the dictionary maker. In the department explanatory of "Noted Names," Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (edition 1883) says:

"The Dark Day, May 19, 1780. So called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England. The obscuration began about ten o'clock in the morning, and continued tin the middle of the next night, but with difference of degree and duration in different places. The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known."

Cause Unknown

At the time, some explained the darkness as being due to smoke from forest fires, others to the exceptional rise of vapors and atmospheric dust in the warm spring following the melting of unusually heavy winter snows. But forest fires were not of extraordinary occurrence in these regions, and many a springtime since has seen the melting of heavy winter snows and the rise of vapors; yet May 19, 1780, still stands unique in the annals of modern times as "the dark day." However observers and writers disagreed as to the nature of the mantle of darkness that was drawn over New England that day, they were one in recognizing the extraordinary character of the event.

The facts are fully covered by the statement in the dictionary, "The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known." What we do know is that the Savior's prophecy declared, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." And when the time for it came, the sign appeared.

Contemporary Records

Though the comparatively small-sized newspapers of the day were crowded with news of the progress of the Revolutionary War, then raging, no little space was given to reports and discussions of this remarkable darkening of the sun. A correspondent of the Boston Gazette and Country Journal (of May 29, 1780) reported observations made at Ipswich Hamlet, Mass., "by several gentlemen of liberal education."

"About eleven o'clock the darkness was such as to demand our attention, and put us upon making observations. At half past eleven, in a room with three windows, twenty-four panes each, all open toward

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the southeast and south, large print could not be read by persons of good eyes. "About twelve o'clock, the windows being still open, a candle cast a shade so well defined on the wall, as that profiles were taken with as much ease as they could have been in the night.

"About one o'clock a glint of light which had continued to this time in the east, shut in, and the darkness was greater than it had been for any time before.... We dined about two, the windows all open, and two candles burning on the table. "In the time of the greatest darkness some of the . . . fowls went to their roost. Cocks crowed in answer to one another as they commonly do in the night. Woodcocks, which axe night birds, whistled as they do only in the dark. Frogs peeped. In short, there was the appearance of midnight at noonday.

"About three o'clock the light in the west increased, the motion of the clouds [became] more quick, their color higher and more brassy than at any time before. There appeared to be quick flashes or coruscations, not unlike the aurora borealis. . . . About half past four our company, which had passed an unexpected night very cheerfully together, broke up.

Of the night following, this gentleman (then at Salem) wrote: "Perhaps it never was darker since the children of Israel left the house of bondage. This gross darkness held till about one o'clock, although the moon had been full but the day before." The Boston Independent Chronicle of June 8 quoted from Thomas's Massachusetts Spy:

"During the whole time a sickly, melancholy gloom overcast the face of nature. Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, no object was discernible, but by the help of some artificial light, which when seen from the neighboring houses and other places at a distance, appeared through a kind of Egyptian darkness, which seemed almost impervious to the rays.

"This unusual phenomenon excited the fears and apprehensions of many people. Some considered it as a portentous omen of the wrath of Heaven in vengeance denounced against the land, others as the immediate harbinger of the last day, when 'the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light."

Not only over the land, but out at sea also, the unnatural darkness of the day and night of May 19, 1780, was observed. In the Independent Chronicle of June 15, 1780, a correspondent, telling of interviews with various observers, said:

"I have also seen a very sensible captain of a vessel, who was that morning about forty leagues southeast of Boston. He says the cloud which appeared at the west was the blackest he ever saw. About eleven o'clock there was a little rain, and it grew dark. Between one and two he was obliged to light a large candle to steer by. . . . Between nine and ten at night, he ordered his men to take in some of the sails, but it was so dark, that they could not find the way from one mast to the other."

Thoughts Turned to the Judgment

This writer commented as follows concerning the feelings awakened by the event: "Various have been the sentiments of people concerning the designs of Providence in spreading the unusual darkness over us. Some suppose it portentous of the last scene. I wish it may have some good effect on the minds of the wicked, and that they may be excited to prepare for that solemn day."

The Independent Chronicle of June 22, 1780, printed a letter from Dr. Samuel Stearns, who had been appealed to because of his knowledge "in philosophy and astronomy." First, he disposed of one suggestion that had been made: "That the darkness was not caused by an eclipse is manifest by the various positions of the planets of our system at that time; for the moon was more than one hundred and fifty degrees from the sun all that day."

Then, in the rather heavy language of the science of that period, this writer told how the action of the sun's heat was continually projecting into the atmosphere particles of earthy matter; and in his opinion it was some "vast collection of such particles that caused the late uncommon darkness." But as to the real accounting for the phenomenon he wrote:

"The primary cause must be imputed to Him that walks through the circuit of heaven, who stretches out the heaven like a curtain, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks upon the wings of the wind. It was He, at whose voice the stormy winds are obedient, that commanded these exhalations to be collected and condensed together, that with them He might darken both the day and the night. Which

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darkness was, perhaps, not only a token of His indignation against the crying iniquities and abominations of the people, but an omen of some future destruction.”

Thus men's minds were exercised by this sign “in the sun, and in the moon.” The early records of New York City tell of the interest excited there, though evidently the darkness was not so marked as it was farther north.

In the Connecticut Legislature

President Timothy Dwight, of Yale College, a contemporary, left the following account of one of the historic incidents of the day: “The legislature of Connecticut was then in session at Hartford. A very general opinion prevailed that the day of judgment was at hand. The house of representatives, being unable to transact their business, adjourned. A proposal to adjourn the council [a second legislative body called the Governor's Council] was under consideration. When the opinion of Colonel Davenport was asked, he answered, 'I am against an adjournment. The day of judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought.’” Barber, “Connecticut Historical Collections,” p. 403.

It was this striking incident that Whittier described with the poet's pen:

“Meanwhile in the old Statehouse, dim as ghosts, Sat the lawgivers of Connecticut, Trembling beneath their legislative robes. It is the Lord's great day! Let us adjourn.”

“Some said; and then, as with one accord, All eyes were turned to Abraham Davenport. He rose, slow cleaving with his steady voice the intolerable hush. This well may be the day of judgment which the world awaits. But be it so or not, I only know My present duty, and my Lord's command To occupy till He come. So at the post Where He bath set me in His providence I choose, for one, to meet Him face to face. No faithless servant, frightened from my task, But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls. And therefore, with all reverence, I would say, Let God do His work, we will see to ours. Bring in the candles.”

Thus in a manner that arrested the attention of men and solemnity into their hearts, with thoughts of the coming of the great day of God, the first of the predicted signs in the heavens was revealed. At a later time, when students of the Bible seemed moved upon simultaneously, in both Europe and America, to give attention to the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming, it was more generally understood that these signs had come in fulfillment of prophecy. As we look to the past, we see how truly the tokens of the coming Day began to appear as the church of Christ emerged fully from the long, dark period of tribulation. A new era was dawning, in which the Lord was to fill the earth with light before His second appearing, according to His word to Daniel the prophet:

“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.” Daniel 12:4. At last the time of the end was at hand, and the signs of the latter days had begun to appear in the earth and in the heavens. The Lord was preparing to send to all the world the closing gospel message of Christ's soon coming in glory.

8. THE FALLING STARS OF 1833

“The Stars Shall Fall from Heaven”

A GREAT impetus was given to the study of divine prophecy by the events of the closing years of the eighteenth century. Observers had seen the papal power receive a “deadly wound” in the events and effects of the French Revolution; and it was understood that the world was entering a new era of enlightenment and liberty.

Bible students began to see more clearly the lesson of the great outlines of historic prophecy, and hearts were stirred with the evidences that the coming of the Lord was drawing near. In Europe and America, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, there was the beginning of a revival of the study and preaching of the advent idea.

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Another Sign in the Heavens

Just here appeared another great sign in the heavens, foretold by the word of prophecy. Of the sign that was to follow the darkening of the sun and moon, Christ's prophecy says: "The stars shall fall from heaven." Matthew 24: 29. The prophet John beheld the spectacle in a vision of the last days, and described it in these words: "The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Revelation 6:13.

On Nov. 13, 1833, came the wondrous celestial exhibition of falling stars, which is listed as one of the most remarkable phenomena of the astronomical story. Meteoric displays, swarms of shooting stars, have been observed at various times all through the ages; but this phenomenon, coming in the order given by the prophecy, that is, following the darkening of the sun, constituted the sublime display answering to the pen-picture of the Apocalypse,-as if all the stars of heaven were falling to the earth.

The essential thing about a sign is that it shall be seen, that the circumstances of its appearance shall fasten attention. Not in America alone, but equally in all the civilized world, as a topic of study, this sign in the heavens commanded the attention of men.

An English scientist, Revelation Thomas Milner, F. R. G. S., wrote: "The attention of astronomers in Europe, and all over the world, was, as may be imagined, strongly roused by intelligence of this celestial display on the Western continent." - "The Gallery of Nature" (London, 1852), page 141. This writer called it "by far the most splendid display on record."-Id., page 139.

Another English astronomical writer of more recent date says: "Once for all, then, as the result of the star fall of 1833, the study of luminous meteors became an integral part of astronomy."- Clerke, "History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century," page 329.

This same work describes the extent of the display as follows: "On the night of Nov. 12-13, 1833, a tempest of falling stars broke over the earth. North America bore the brunt of its pelting. 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."- Page 828.

The Spectacle Described

The closest scientific observations were made by Professor Denison Olmsted, professor of astronomy at Yale, who wrote in the American Journal of Science:

"The morning of Nov. 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." Volume 25 (1834), pages 863, 364.

Professor Simon Newcomb, the astronomer, declares this phenomenal exhibition of falling stars "the most remarkable one ever observed." (See "Astronomy for Everybody," page 280) This was not merely a display of an unusual number of falling stars, such as Humboldt observed in South America in 1799, or such as we find recorded of other times before and since. It was a "shower" of falling stars, just such a spectacle as one must picture from the words of the prophecy, "And the stars of heaven fell."

The French astronomer Flammarion says of the density of the shower: "The Boston observer, Ohnsted, compared them, at the moment of maximum, to half the number of flakes which we perceive in the air during an ordinary shower of snow." - "Popular Astronomy," page 536.

This affords us a better idea of the scene than the estimate of 34,640 stars an hour, which was made by Professor Olmsted after the rain of the stars had greatly abated, so that he was able to make an attempt at counting.

Dr. Humphreys, president of St. John's College, Annapolis, said of the appearance at the Maryland capital: "In the words of most, they fell like flakes of snow."- American Journal of Science, Volume 25 (1834), page 372.

Nothing less than this could have presented the counterpart of the prophetic picture. Thoughtful hearts were solemnized by the unwonted spectacle. Professor Alexander Twining, civil engineer, "late tutor in Yale College," giving his views as to the nature of the flaming visitants from space, wrote: "Had they held on their course unabated for three seconds longer, half a continent must, to all appearance, have been

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involved in unheard of calamity. But that almighty Being who made the world, and knew its dangers, gave it also its armature - endowing the atmospheric medium around it with protecting, no less than with life-sustaining, properties.

“Considered as one of the rare and wonderful displays of the Creator's preserving care, as well as the terrible magnitude and power of His agencies, it is not meet that such occurrences as those of November 13 should leave no more solid and permanent effect upon the human mind than the impression of a splendid seen.” - American Journal of Science, Volume 25 (1834), Page 351.

Multitudes felt that the great Creator had spoken to men in this notable wonder of His heavens. Again and again in the records and reminiscences of that time, testimony is borne to the fact that observers were impressed with the likeness of the scene to that described in the divine prophecy as one of the signs of the end of the world.

The Prophetic Picture Reproduced

The New York Journal of Commerce emphasized the exactness of detail with which the prophecy described the scene as it appeared in 1833. This is the apocalyptic picture, as the ancient prophet saw it in vision: “The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.” Revelation 6:13.

A correspondent of the Journal of Commerce draws the picture as it was seen nearly eighteen centuries later, the likeness to the prophetic description being emphasized in every line: “No philosopher or scholar has told or recorded an event like that of yesterday morning. A prophet eighteen hundred years ago foretold it exactly, if we will be at the trouble of understanding stars falling to mean falling stars.”- New York Journal of Commerce, November 14, 1833.

In this connection was noted by the same writer the special appropriateness of the prophet's figure of the fig tree casting the green figs in a mighty wind. “Here is the exactness of the prophet. The falling stars did not come as if from several trees shaken, but from one. Those which appeared in the east fell toward the east. Those which appeared in the north fell toward the north. Those which appeared in the west fell toward the west. And those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the park) fell toward the south. And they fell not as ripe fruit falls. Far from it. But they flew, they were cast, like the unripe fig, which at first refuses to leave the branch. And when it does break its hold, flies swiftly, straight off, descending; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force.”

Professor Olmsted's long and carefully elaborated account in the American Journal of Science, gave a report from a correspondent in Bowling Green, Mo., as follows. “Though there was no moon, when we first observed them, their brilliancy was so great that we could, at times, read common-sized print without much difficulty, and the light which they afforded was much whiter than that of the moon, in the clearest and coldest night, when the ground is covered with snow. The air itself, the face of the earth as far as we could behold it, all the surrounding objects, and the very countenances of men, wore the aspect and hue of death, occasioned by the continued, pallid glare of these countless meteors, which in all their grandeur flamed lawless through the sky.

“There was a grand and indescribable gloom on all around, an awe-inspiring sublimity on all above; while the sanguine flood rolled a broad slaughter over the plains of heaven, and nature's self did seem to totter on the brink of time!”

“There was scarcely a space in the firmament which was not filled at every instant with these falling stars, nor on it could you in general perceive any particular difference in appearance. Still at times they seemed to shower down in groups - calling to mind the fig tree, casting her untimely figs when shaken by a mighty wind.” - Volume 25 (1834), page 382.

A Sign to All the World

It was not in North America alone, but in all the civilized world, that the attention of men was called to the prophetic word by the discussions of this event. Thus the English scientific writer, Thomas Milner, writing for the British public, spoke as follows of the profound impression made:

“In many districts, the mass of the population were terror-struck, and the more enlightened were

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awed at contemplating so vivid a picture of the apocalyptic image - that of the stars of heaven falling to the earth, even as a fig tree casting her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." – "The Gallery of Nature" (London, 1852), page 140. So the sign in the heavens made its solemn appeal to all the world. It brought to the multitudes who saw it, thoughts of God and the last great day. An observer living at the time in Georgia, wrote, "Everybody felt that it was the judgment, and that the end of the world had come." Another, in Kentucky wrote, "In every direction I could hear men, women, and children screaming, The judgment day is come!"

Rather, it was a signal that the hour of God's judgment was drawing near. The signs so long foretold were appearing, one by one, to register their enduring mark on the record of fulfilling prophecy. Immediately following these times, there began an awakening concerning the vital Bible doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ, which has grown into the definite advent movement that is carrying the gospel message of preparation for the coming of the Lord to every nation and tongue and people.

The Sign of 1833 Emphasized by Other Displays

We have mentioned the fact that Humboldt had observed an extraordinary fall of meteorites in South America, thirty three years before, in 1799. And he reported at the time that the oldest inhabitants there had a recollection of a similar display in 1766. From these reports, scientists deduced the theory that these showers were to be expected every thirty-three years. Hence in 1866 they were watching for a repetition of the 1833 display.

That there was a measure of truth in the deduction was made evident by an unusual fall of meteorites Nov. 14, 1866. This time Europe was the scene of the display. But the event was not to be compared with that of 1833. This appears plain from the account of observations made by Sir Robert Ball and Lord Rosse, the British astronomers.

Sir Robert Ball says that when the meteorites began to fall, he and Lord Rosse went out upon the wall of the observatory housing Lord Rosse's great reflecting telescope: "There, for the next two or three hours, we witnessed a spectacle which can never fade from my memory. The shooting stars gradually increased in number until sometimes several were seen at once." – "Story of the Heavens," page 380.

Grand as the spectacle was, it was but a reminder, apparently, of the star shower of 1833, when not "several" meteorites fell at a time, nor many, merely, but, as it appeared, "the stars of heaven fell unto the earth."

However, the spectacle of 1866, which was observed over a great part of the Old World, served to direct renewed attention to the incomparable event of 1833, as well as to the prophetic descriptions of the "wonders in the heavens" (Joel 2:30) which were to appear as the end drew near.

The display was most brilliant, apparently, in Western Asia. The veteran missionary, Dr. H. H. Jessup, of the Presbyterian Missionary College, of Beirut, describes the scene in his "Fifty Three Years in Syria". "On the morning of the fourteenth [November], at three o'clock, I was roused from a deep sleep by the voice of one of the young men calling, 'The stars are all coming down.' The meteors poured down like a rain of fire. Many of them were large and varicolored, and left behind them a long train of fire. One immense green meteor came down over Lebanon, seeming as large as the moon, and exploded with a large noise, leaving a green pillar of light in its train. It was vain to attempt to count them, and the display continued until dawn, when their light was obscured by the king of day. The Mohammedans gave the call to prayer from the minarets, and the common people were in terror." - Volume 1, pages 316, 317.

Textbooks and astronomical works thereupon began to count it as fully established that every thirty-three years the displays would be repeated. It was confidently predicted that 1899 would witness a repetition, possibly on the scale of 1833.

Professor Langley's "New Astronomy" (published in 1888) said: "The great November shower, which is coming once more in this century, and which every reader may hope to see toward 1899, is of particular interest to us as the first whose movements were subject to analysis." Chamber's Astronomy, published in 1889, said: "The meteors of November 13 may be expected to reappear with great brilliancy in 1899."- Volume 1, page 685. But the November date passed in 1899, and the years have passed; and the wondrous scene of 1833 has not been repeated. Clerke's "History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century" says:

"We can no longer count upon the Leonids [as the meteorites of 1833 were called, because they

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seemed to fall from a point in the constellation of Leo]. Their glory, for scenic purposes, is departed.”-
Page 838.

The Lord's Signal to Watch

Thus the wisest astronomical predictions made shortly before 1899, based upon the apparently recurrent regularity of the phenomenon, failed; but the predictions of the sure word of prophecy, set down on the sacred record eighteen centuries before, were fulfilled to the letter. At the close of the days of the predicted tribulation of the church, the signs began to appear the sun was darkened, the moon withheld its light, and the stars of heaven fell.

The series began at the time specified, the signs came in the order given in Christ's prophecy. The record of history bears witness that the prophecy was fulfilled. It may be that on a yet more awful and universal scale these phenomena will be seen again in that last shaking of the powers of heaven which is to attend the rolling back of the heavens as a scroll, the immediate prelude to Christ's glorious appearing. But Christ's prophecy, at this point, was not giving a description of events at the very end of the world, but signs by which it might be known when the end was drawing near.

As the signs should be recognized, the Savior intended that those who loved His appearing should be quickened with hope, and inspired to hasten to the world with the gospel message preparing the way of the Lord. The Lord's word for His children was, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads. For your redemption draws nigh.” Luke 21: 28.

Long ago these signs began to come to pass. Now may the Lord's believing children well look up and rejoice, knowing that the day of eternal redemption is indeed nigh at hand.

He Will Come for His Own

IN the glad time of the harvest,
in the grand millennial year,
When the King shall take His scepter,
Add to judge the world appear,
Earth and sea shall yield their treasure,
All shall stand before the throne.
Just awards will then be given,
When the King shall claim His own.

O the rapture of His people!
Long they've dwelt on earth's low sod,
With their hearts ever turning homeward,
Rich in faith and love to God.
They will share the life immortal,
They will know as they axe known,
They will pass the pearly portal,
When the King shall claim His own.

Long they've toiled within the harvest,
Sown the precious seed with tears.
Soon they'll drop their heavy burdens
In the glad millennial years.
They will share the bliss of heaven,
Nevermore to sigh or moan.
Starry crowns will then be given,
When the King shall claim His own.

We shall greet the loved and loving,

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Who have left us lonely here.
Every heartache will be banished
When the Savior shall appear.
Never grieved with sin or sorrow,
Never weary or alone.
O, we long for that glad morrow
When the King shall claim His own!

L. D. Santee

THE MEANING OF PRESENT-DAY CONDITIONS

FROM the specific signs in the heavens, which were to herald the coming of the latter days and awaken the church to look for its coming Lord, our Savior's prophecy passed on to designate certain general conditions in the world which were to continue until the great day of God comes:

“There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring. 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. Among the developments here foretold, and which contribute to the “distress of nations, with perplexity,” we may list the following:

1. Political Unrest -the Arming of the Nations

Following on closely with the signs in the heavens, there appears also the awakening to national aspirations and rivalries in Europe, out of which has grown the arming of the nations. The beginning of the modern race of armaments may be dated from those stirring and eventful years of 1830 to 1848. We have seen the resources of the soil and the inventive genius of man devoted to preparations for war on a scale never before thought of. The prophet Joel foretold these conditions in the last days:

“Proclaim you this among the Gentiles [“the nations,” R. V.]: Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Let the heathen be wakened. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision [or “cutting off”]: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” Joel 3: 9-14.

Another prophecy forewarns of the “peace and safety” cry that is to be heard as the end draws near. We are told that many people in the last days will be saying that swords are to be beaten into plowshares, and that the nations will cease from war (Isaiah 2:3,4). But the actual conditions are repeatedly described in prophecy as warlike and perilous. Thus the revelator saw the closing days:

“The nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou should give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great. And should destroy them which destroy the earth.” Revelation 11: 18. What we see then among the nations proclaims the approaching end.

2. Signs in the Social World

A New Testament prophecy of the latter days says: “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, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despising of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” 2 Timothy 3:1-4.

The “perilous times” have come, when, as never before, the world is pleasure mad. “Unrestrained passion for pleasure,” said M. Comte, editor of the French *Relevant Social*, writing just before the

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European war, is bringing a terrible train of evils into modern society. Along with it he put "the hunt for money without regard for means," adding: "This is the theme which manufacturers, business men, men in the public administration, continually harp on with ever the same conviction and ever the same wealth of proof.

The note is ever the same, and the conclusion identical: *Nous sommes perdus!* [We are lost!] I'-Quoted in *Record of Christian Work*, July, 1914. Many agencies for social and temperance reform are rendering the greatest human service; but for lost humanity the only hope is Christ, the divine Savior. With an urgency born of the last call, His gospel is sounding to a world on the verge of eternity. Yet with divine love longing to save, the world sweeps on, less and less mindful of eternal interests. Christ's prophecy foretold it as it is:

"As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away. So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37-39. Who can look out upon mankind today without the conviction that this scripture is being fulfilled? The drift is strong toward the world and away from God; but we are bidden to watch and pray, lest the coming day find us unprepared.

3. Signs in the Industrial World

Industrial conditions today add their contribution to the "distress of nations, with perplexity. Through the word of prophecy the Lord long ago foretold these conditions, with a warning to the careless rich, and a warning to the laborer and the poor, not to be drawn into contention over the things of this world, for the Judge is at the door. The prophecy, it will be seen, refers specifically to latter-day conditions.

"Go to now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is rotted; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; you have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed the just; and he does not resist you.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be you also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned: behold, the Judge stands before the door." James 5: 1-9.

There is no need to argue that the issues with which the prophecy deals are pressing upon the world with ever-increasing perplexity. We quote but two statements, by men not engaged in agitation, but calmly and thoughtfully setting down the signs of the times. The late Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock) wrote a few years ago in the *Review of Internationalism*:

"The religion of Europe is not Christianity, but the worship of the god of war. Unless something is done, the condition of the poor in Europe will grow worse and worse. It is no use shutting our eyes. Revolution may not come soon, not probably in our time, but come it will, and as sure as fate there will be an explosion such as the world has never seen."

Of the rapid growth of discontent and its propaganda, Mr. Frederick Townsend Martin, of New York, wrote:

"Fifty years ago there was scarcely a voice of protest; indeed, there was hardly anything to protest against. Twenty-five years ago the protest was clear and distinct, and we understood it. Ten years ago the protest found expression in a dozen weekly publications, but today the protest is circulated not by hundreds or thousands of printed copies of books, pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers, but actually by the million.

"This propaganda of protest has its daily papers that are distinctive and published for that purpose, and that purpose only. It has its magazines and tens of thousands of weekly papers. Only a fool sneers at such a volume of publicity as that.

"The warnings that hundreds of us are uttering may be ignored. The squandering may go on, the vulgar bacchanalia may be prolonged, the poor may have to writhe under the iron heel of the iron lord -the

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dance of death may go on until society's E string snaps, and then the Vesuvius of the underworld will belch forth its lava of death and destruction. "- Hearst's Magazine, September, 1913.

Thus hearts grow faint "for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." But while the increasing "distress of nations, with perplexity," abounds, the Lord sends the steadying, assuring message that soon Christ will come to end the reign of sin and strife. He would have His children keep the gospel light glowing, and wait patiently for Him.

4. The Great Missionary Movement

The Savior's prophecy of the signs of His Second Coming places the work of world evangelization as the culminating sign. This in itself is a joyful token of the approaching end, a bright signal of hope in a suffering world. He said: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

Before the end, the light of the gospel was to shine into every dark corner of the earth. True to the sure word of prophecy, when the latter days began, "the time of the end," -there sprang up the great movement of modern missions which has been one of the leading characteristics of the last century. Here are a few facts showing the missionary developments of a single century:

"In 1800 the foreign missionary societies numbered seven. In 1900 they numbered over 500. In 1800 the income of seven societies amounted to about \$50,000. In 1900 the income was over 315,000,000. In 1800 the number of native communicants enrolled in Protestant mission churches was 7,000. In 1900 there were 1,500,000 native communicants. In 1800 the adherents of Protestant churches in heathen lands were, estimated at 15,000. In 1900 they numbered 3,500,000. In 1800 only one fifth of the human family had the Bible in languages they could read. In 1900 nine tenths of the people of the world had the Word of God in languages and dialects known to them."

Since 1900 the missionary movement has remarkably increased in extent and activity. It is estimated that now there are about 22,000 foreign missionaries in the fields, with many thousands of trained native evangelists and helpers. The prophecy is fulfilling before our eyes. It is not the conversion of the world that Christ's words foretold, but the evangelization of the world; and when all the world has heard the gospel of the kingdom, "then shall the end come."

Another prophecy - that of Revelation 14: 6-14 - shows that the closing phase of this world-wide missionary movement is to be the proclamation of the special gospel message of preparation for the coming of the Lord, calling all men to worship God and keep His commandments, and warning them against following the traditions of men that make void the Word of God.

With the coming of this generation there has come just such a message, in the rise and progress of the advent movement, the burden of the message being expressed in the very language of the prophecy- "Fear God, and give glory to Him. For the hour of His judgment is come." Revelation 14:7. And the movement is spreading rapidly "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Thus in vision the prophet on Patmos heard the message given; and when its warning cry had reached all nations, he saw Christ coming in the clouds of heaven to reap the harvest of the earth.

"Even at the Doors"

Of the beginning of the special signs of the last days, Christ said: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh." Luke 21:28. But of the time when these signs should all be seen fulfilled or in process of fulfillment, the Savior said:

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: so, likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Matthew 24:32-35.

In this generation we see these things. All about us the signs have appeared. We know, then, by the word that shall not pass away, that the generation has at last appeared that is to see the Savior coming in power and great glory. "Of that day and hour knows no man," but we may know "that, it is near, even at the doors" the day for which the saints of God have hoped through all the ages.

10. THE HISTORIC PROPHECY OF DANIEL 7

So important is it that we understand the events leading on to the end, that repeatedly the “sure word of prophecy” outlines the course of this world's history, and sets up way marks along the highway to the everlasting kingdom. In the light of prophecy we see the hand of God guiding and overruling through all history, shaping events for the carrying out of His purpose to end the reign of sin and to bring in the reign of eternal righteousness. His prophetic word foretells events of history, that we may know that He is the living God over all, and that we may understand that the divine purpose will surely be fulfilled. Above a wicked world there is a God in heaven, waiting only- the appointed time for the accomplishment of His purposes.

“I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure. I have spoken it, I also will bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. My salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion.” Isaiah 46: 9-13.

In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, recorded in the second chapter of Daniel, the Lord revealed in brief but graphic outline the course of history from the days of Babylon to the end of the world. The four great universal monarchies, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome - were represented by the various parts of the metallic image. That prophecy described particularly the division of the Roman Empire into the kingdoms of western Europe. “In the days of these kings,” declared the word of the Lord, the God of heaven was to set up His kingdom, bringing an end to all earthly powers.

In the seventh chapter we are taken over the same course of history, in Daniel's vision of the four beasts. Here also chief attention is devoted to the fourth great kingdom; and especially to its divided state; for the events taking place at, this time are of the deepest eternal interest to all men. In this vision Daniel saw four universal empires represented by great beasts. One after another the symbolic beasts arose, did their work, and gave place to the next scenes in the history. The angel clearly explained to Daniel the meaning of the vision:

“These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.” Of necessity, then, it is a repetition of the story of the four universal monarchies dealt with in the second chapter, and ending with the setting up of the everlasting kingdom. Let us place the view given the prophet in vision alongside the record of history. First, however, a word as to the manner in which the great beasts appeared to the prophet:

“I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.” Again and again, in the figurative language of Scripture, winds are used as the symbol for wars; and the sea, or waters, for nations or peoples. (See Jeremiah 25:31-33; Revelation 17:15.) The prophet saw the clashing of the nations in war, and out of these conflicts arose the kingdoms described in the prophecy.

Babylon

Note the prophetic picture of the prophecy and the corresponding representation in history. Prophecy. “The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.” History. As the lion is king of beasts, it was a fitting symbol of Babylon, “the glory of kingdoms.” Isaiah 13:19. The eagle's wings suggest rapidity of movement and far reaching conquest. The prophet Habakkuk said of it, “Their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle.” This was the characteristic of Babylon under the earlier kings, but especially under Nebuchadnezzar. Berosus, the ancient Chaldean historian, wrote of him:

“This Babylonian king conquered Egypt, and Syria, and Phoenicia, and Arabia; and exceeded in his exploits all that had reigned before him in Babylon.” (See Flavius Josephus “Against Apion,” book 1, paragraph 19) But now, at the time of Daniel's vision, degeneracy had come; the empire was tottering. The lion heart was gone, the eagle's wings were plucked, and within three years from the time the vision was given, Babylon was overthrown.