

Signs Of Christ's Coming

Foretold In Matthew 24

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“I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe.” John 14: 29.

We live in an age of world wars, which are destroying not only nations, but civilization's best ideals—freedom and liberty.

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them,

Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. 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.” Matthew 24:1-30.

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01. The Coming Kingdom

TIMES of distress and perplexity of nations are times in which to stress the universal prayer set for Christendom: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10. A candid study of the Holy Scriptures will prove them to be an accurate commentary on current and future events.

Scripture opens with a new earth, the home of sinless man, no sorrow there, or death. That earth, renewed, is to come again. It is described in the closing portion of Scripture. The prophet on Patmos saw it in vision: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Revelation 21:1-4.

That is God's "new order" of things, for which we pray when we say, "Thy kingdom come." Some have felt that it is a long time coming. The ancient prophet Habakkuk cried out for it as he saw the Chaldeans building up the Babylonian Empire, sweeping up captive nations as the sand. He said: "O Lord, how long shall I cry, even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!" Habakkuk 1: 2, 3. The Lord gave him a vision of the glory of Christ's coming. That is God's answer to this cry.

And the Lord told Habakkuk: "The vision is yet for an appointed time: . . . though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry!" Habakkuk 2: 3.

So the voice of divine prophecy has cried through the ages. And it is called the "more sure Word of prophecy." Ancient Greece had its famed oracles, the Delphian oracle and others, that claimed to foretell events. But wise old Romans like Cato and Cicero averred that there was no power in such oracles to foretell the course of events in accurate detail. Pindar, the Greek, wrote of those professed prophesying:

"The approaching day's event, mysterious Heaven
Has not to helpless mortals given; and all is blind towards dim futurity."
Ode 12.

But the Apostle Peter knew a voice of sure presage, that had foretold the history of the world in exact outline from the dawn of history to those times of the Roman Empire, and that spoke with surety of future events unto the coming of the everlasting kingdom at last. He wrote "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Daystar arise in your hearts." 2 Peter 1: 19.

For those who may be tempted to grow faithless with the delay, the same apostle says: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come." 2 Peter 3: 8-10.

It is sure to come. The glory of Christ's appearing to usher in the new order will consume sin. "The elements shall melt with fervent heat," says Peter; and he adds "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." Verse 13.

Christ Himself, on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, foretold the outline of events from that day to the end, and described the signs that would precede His second coming to begin the work of setting up the everlasting kingdom.

"There shall be signs," He said. And when these signs begin to come to pass, believers are to look up and lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption is drawing nigh. Let us follow the outline of history that Christ foretold to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, when they came to Him and said: "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.

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02. Jerusalem's Fall Foretold

BY the path over the Mount of Olives Christ approached Jerusalem. He was returning to that place to bear His last messages of warning to the "city of the Great King."

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that your enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of thy visitation." Luke 19: 41-44.

Yet never had Jerusalem's position seemed more secure than on this day when Christ looked down upon it from the Mount of Olives. His words puzzled the disciples. After His final visit to the temple, Jesus departed, saying, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Matthew 23:38.

His companions could not understand these references to the great building that was the pride of the Jewish people. "As He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" Mark 13: 1. Master, how could such masonry be laid in ruins? Look at that building!

Jesus answered: "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matthew 24:2. Now the disciples understood that He was actually foretelling the overthrow of city and temple.

"WHAT SHALL BE THE SIGN?"

Then the disciples wanted to know all about it; for they evidently associated the destruction of Jerusalem with the end of the world and the setting up of the everlasting kingdom. "As He sat up on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Verse 3.

In reply Christ uttered that great prophecy of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, covering events that stand like beacon lights through the centuries—from the fall of Jerusalem to His second coming in power and glory.

A STRIKING SIMILARITY

As the disciples associated the two things in their question—the fall of Jerusalem and His second coming—so in His reply He gave the signs of both. Indeed, He mingled the signs of the two great events together. In His first outline (verses 4-14), we have as signs to precede the events.

Deceptive movements and false christs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecution of believers, the gospel to the nations.

Those who lived before the time of Jerusalem's fall saw such things. Before the Apostle Paul's death (about AD 66), the gospel had been carried to all the known world. Colossians 1:23.

But we learn from this and other prophecies that these same conditions, on a much larger scale, will precede the second coming of Christ. Again, and to a greater world, "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 JERUSALEM'S FALL

The scenes forecast by the prophecy and the setting of events that led up to the fall of Jerusalem hastened on after Christ's crucifixion—as stage mechanics rush the various scenes into place before the curtain rises.

A hand of restraint had seemed laid upon the lands during the earthly life of Christ. In fact, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, all the world, for a wonder, was pretty much at peace. The temple of Janus in Rome, always kept open in war, was closed. Suetonius, the historian of the Roman Caesars, says of Augustus: "The temple of Janus Quirinus, which had been shut twice only, from the era of the building of the city to his own time, he closed thrice in a much shorter period, having established universal peace both by sea and land."—Chapter 22.

Yes, restraint was upon the nations as the angels over the hills of Bethlehem sang that chorus, "Peace on earth."

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“No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high up hung:
The hooked chariot stood Unstained by hostile blood;
The trumpet spoke not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was by.”
-Milton.

During Christ's ministry the land of Judea was comparatively calm; but now the spirit of war and strife seemed suddenly to break forth on every side. Josephus says: “The affairs of the Jews grew worse and worse continually.”

Ridpath says: “One Christ came after another. Revolt was succeeded by revolt.”

Fighting was on between Syrians and Jews, and thousands were slain. The Romans-rulers of the world-were defied and attacked. These people of Jerusalem had rejected a Messiah who promised deliverance from sin here, and an everlasting kingdom hereafter. They would have none of a meek and lowly Deliverer from sin. As for the world to come, they wanted deliverance from the Romans now, and a kingdom now; not a kingdom in the world to come. They had no will to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Prosperity here and now, was their slogan. In trying to get it, they filled the land with wars and rumors of wars, and pulled down their nation in ruin.

Famines came, and pestilence, and “earthquakes, in divers places,” as Christ had forewarned. These calamities were especially frequent and severe in the period between the crucifixion of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem. Newton sums up the record of earthquakes: ‘And earthquakes, in divers places,’ as particularly that in Crete in the reign of Claudius, mentioned by Philostratus in the life of Apollonius, and those also mentioned by Philostratus at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, in all which places some Jews inhabited; and those at Rome mentioned by Tacitus; and that at Laodicea, in the reign of Nero, mentioned by Tacitus, which city was overthrown, as were likewise Hierapolis and Colosse; and that in Campania, mentioned by Seneca; and that at Rome in the reign of Galba, mentioned by Suetonius.” – “Dissertations,” page 379.

“The world itself is being shaken to pieces,” wrote Seneca, the Roman, in those times, “and there is universal consternation.”

ORGANIZED RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Many at the time must have recalled the cry that rang through the streets of Jerusalem about forty years before, as Pilate sought to restrain the Jewish leaders and set Jesus free. “His blood be on us!” the mob cried. “His blood be on us!”

This was not the voice of the common people who had “heard Him gladly.” A well-organized religious group secured the condemnation of Jesus. The religious leaders determined to put a stop to His teaching. They charged that He taught the people to “transgress the tradition of the elders,” the customs of the church. Jesus answered, “Why do you also transgress the commandments of God by your tradition?” Matthew 15: 3.

Christ taught only the old, old truths of the Word of God, which they professed to follow, but which they had made void by human tradition. And because of His loyalty to the divine law, they condemned Him by their human law.

The Jewish leaders disguised their enmity under high sounding phrases. It was a mere matter of civil procedure. The law of the land must be enforced, they argued. “We have a law,” they said to Pilate, “and by our law He ought to die.” The Roman governor saw through the injustice of religious prejudice. But at their threat of accusing him to Caesar-an ancient form of applying political pressure-he yielded at last ‘to the church leaders. What a warning here against any tendency on the part of the church today to seek the power of civil law for the promotion or enforcement of religious usages!

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03. Details of the Prophecy Fulfilled

Josephus tells of portents that startled Jerusalem before the end. A countryman appeared, who cried in the streets and lanes, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" He was severely punished; but to no avail. Especially at feasts the disquieting cry would be raised, "Woe to Jerusalem!" This continued, Josephus says, "until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased. For, as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, 'Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house,' and just as he added at the last, 'Woe, woe to myself also,' there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately." – "Wars of the Jews," book 6, chapter 5.

THE FIRST SIEGE AND THE FLIGHT OF THE CHRISTIANS

It was in A.D. 66 that the first Roman army, under Cestius, appeared before Jerusalem. Soon there was fighting about the temple itself. The Romans "attempted to break into the temple at the northern quarter of it; but the Jews beat them off from the cloisters." The cloisters were part of the temple buildings. Then, placing their shields together in the "tortoise-back" formation to protect themselves from darts shot from the wall above and from stones hurled down, the Roman soldiers "undermined the wall, and got all things ready for setting fire to the gate of the temple."

In His prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, Jesus had said to His disciples: "When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. But pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." Matthew 24: 15-20.

Roman legions about the Holy City and the temple itself, with their idolatrous battle standards planted even on the Mount of Olives, were a signal to the Christians to flee. Those in the fields or villages round about could easily do so; but how could those in the city escape, with the Roman army encompassing the walls? An overruling Providence made the way of escape. Josephus says that just as Cestius, the Roman general, had the wall undermined and all in readiness for the attack, suddenly "he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world [*italics ours*]." -Id., book 2, chapter 19.

Those Christian believers, watching for the signal that the Savior had foretold, must have recognized the meaning of the sudden, unexplainable withdrawal. As the Jews opened the gates and rushed out to attack the retreating Romans, the moment and the opportunity for the flight of the Christians had come.

Josephus doubtless referred to these Christians, and possibly others, when he wrote of the flight of many at this moment of Cestius' retreat: "Many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink." -Id., chapter 20.

Two centuries later, Eusebius, who must have had access to material now lost, wrote in his "Ecclesiastical History": "The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella." -Id., book 3, chapter 5.

Their prayer that the flight might not be "in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day," was answered. Under Christ's instruction, they had continued praying for forty years that they might not have to flee out amidst the hardships of winter weather, nor on the holy Sabbath (day of rest. Graetz, the Jewish historian, works out carefully the schedule of days that week, showing that Cestius withdrew from the city on Wednesday, October 7. It was neither cold winter nor sacred Sabbath the day the great body of Christians fled.

Though the next siege was deferred several years, the time for flight was that day when the Jewish forces rushed from the city in pursuit of Cestius. As the fanatical Zealots came back exulting from the slaying of the rearguard of Cestius' army, they took possession of affairs in Jerusalem, and organized every force for the next attack. Christian believers attempting then to get away would have met no mercy.

James Morrison says of conditions that developed in Jerusalem: "The Zealots created and maintained a reign of terror akin to that of the French Revolution, only more dreadful, and, considering the available scope and compass, more bloody." – "Comments on Matthew," page 471.

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A DOOMED CITY

Four years later the Roman army, now under Titus, returned to the siege. The spirit of self-confidence filled the city. Graetz, the Jewish writer, says: "When the Zealots looked upon the fortresses of their capital, the last shadow of alarm melted away. The Romans, they declared, must have wings to take those walls and those towers. Never had Jerusalem been so populous, so beautiful, and so strong as at the moment when she was doomed to destruction." – "History of the Jews," Volume 2, pages 294, 295.

Besides, they must have thought, had not the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob always protected Jerusalem in extremity? But God in mercy had waited, and now the days allotted to that people and city in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9: 24) had more than passed. The word concerning events following the crucifixion was to be fulfilled: "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Daniel 9:26.

They might have known from this ancient prophecy the time of their visitation. But unbelief blinded their eyes to the fact that the "people of the prince" had come to surround their city, this time with divine protection withdrawn.

"O maid of Judah, the appointed comes!
His footstep is in Zoan-where the Lord
With lightning, and with hailstones, smote the kings
From Lachish and from Libnah;
Where He wrought His signs and marvels fighting for
Thy sires, And their deliverance;-now that selfsame field
Rings to the echo of the iron tramp Of him, the Avenger!"
-Henry Day.

Jerusalem seemed drunken with fury. At the last Passover ever celebrated in Jerusalem, while Titus and his army were compassing the walls, rival factions of Jews fought and slew one another about the sacrificial altars of the temple. Satan was in full command.

The hardened Roman besiegers were astonished at the suicidal rashness of the people. Titus tried to persuade them to save at least the temple. Remonstrating with their leaders, he said. "Why do you pollute this holy house with the blood of both foreigners and Jews themselves? I appeal to the gods of my own country, and to every god that ever had any regard to this place (for I do not suppose it to be now regarded by any, of the m); I also appeal to my own army, and to those Jews that are now with me, and even to yourselves, that I do not force you to defile this your sanctuary; and if you will but change the place whereon you will 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." – "Wars of the Jews," book 6, chapter 2.

But Christ had said of the temple: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matthew 24: 2. Titus' efforts to save the temple in spite of the Jews, failed, and the house went down in ruins.

SUPERNATURAL FORCES

This Roman commander and future emperor felt impressed that there was something supernatural about the forces of destruction let loose. Josephus says that as The temple in Jerusalem was the glory of the holy city. Its complete destruction came in fulfillment of prophecy. Titus made the rounds one day, "he gave a groan; and, spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing."-Id., book 5, chapter 12.

When Christ foretold the coming destruction, the disciples could not see how it was, possible for such walls as those of the temple and towers to be thrown down. They said to Him: - "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here?" After the city fell, and Titus had examined these walls and towers, he felt that divine judgment had fallen upon that people. He exclaimed: "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.

Christ had said that these walls should be laid "even with the ground." Luke 19: 44. Josephus says the Romans left a section of the wall and some highest towers standing as a memorial; then he adds: "But for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even *with the ground [*italics ours*] by those that dug it

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up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."-Id., book 7, chapter 1.

It is said that when the temple burned, vast quantities of molten gold from the heavily plated walls ran down amid the foundations. The soldiers overturned everything digging for the treasure. Later the official who was left by the Romans in charge of the ruins, all unknowingly gave a last touch to the fulfillment of prophecies regarding these walls. Lightfoot quotes from the famed Jewish writer, Maimonides, who had it from the ancient Talmudists: "On that ninth day of the month Ab, fatal for vengeance, the wicked Turnus Rufus, of the children of Edom, ploughed up the temple, and the places about it, that that saying might be fulfilled, 'Zion shall be ploughed as a field [Jeremiah 26: 18]." – "Horx Hebraicx et Talmudicx," Volume 2, page 35.

"WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION"

The destruction that came upon Jerusalem was but the fruit of its own ways. When God's protection was thrust finally aside, even He could not save from the judgments that were bound in justice to fall upon persistent transgression.

The witness to the living God is borne by the fulfillment of prophecies of judgment as well as by the happier prophecies of deliverance. This sad story of the fall of Jerusalem is one of the lessons of Bible history "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Corinthians 10: 11.

Jerusalem fell because it knew not the message of God for that day and generation, even though the "sure Word of prophecy" had plainly declared it beforehand, and the Scriptures of truth, were being fulfilled before the eyes of all. Many in Jerusalem saw and believed, and found refuge. But for every man and generation the solemn witness is borne that Jerusalem fell because it knew not the time of its visitation. "If you had known, even you, at least in this thy day!" Luke 19:42.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by for ever 'twixt that darkness and that light."
-Lowell.

04. Signs In The Heavens

SWIFTLY the Savior's prophetic glance swept through the centuries, from the fall of Jerusalem to the times preceding His second coming. He saw the great tribulation of His followers in the long period of papal supremacy foretold in Daniel's prophecy. "Whoso reads, let him understand," He had said of Daniel's prophecy regarding the coming of the Romans to destroy Jerusalem. The same prophecies of Daniel had foretold the 1260 years of papal supremacy -reaching from AD 538, the time of full exaltation of the Papacy to supremacy by the sword of empire, to 1798, when revolutionary France dealt the Papacy a deadly wound by the sword. During this long period this persecuting power would "wear out the saints of the Most High." Daniel 7: 25.

THE 1260 YEARS OF PERSECUTION

Christ's view took in this experience through which his church was to pass. It was not the tribulation accompanying the fall of Jerusalem to which He now refers here.

There the tribulation fell upon those revolting against God. The time of which He now speaks is a time of trial to His own elect, a long period of persecution of His church: "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.

Then, immediately after, He begins to talk of the signs of His second appearing. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," the signs of His second coming were to begin.

The appointed period of tribulation was to reach to the "time of the end," as we see in verse thirty-five of the prophecy of Daniel eleven. Christ's prophecy follows the time schedule of Daniel. Had the

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persecutions continued the full time, we should find the apostasy wearing out the saints, down even to the days of 1798.

THE DAYS SHORTENED

But Christ foretold that those days of tribulation would be shortened; otherwise none of the saints would be left. The persecutions of the Papacy were cut short.

John Wycliffe's preachers, sent forth with the Word of life, sowed the early seeds of the great Reformation.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century set northern Europe generally free from that power. Even in countries which shut out the reform, the force of enlightened public opinion weakened the iron hand of intolerance.

The growing sentiment in France, of antagonism to religious intolerance-which led France later to break with Rome utterly, in the terrible days of the French Revolution-was ripe for expression long before the full prophetic period ended. In 1762 the torture to the death of a Protestant in Southern France brought such an outburst of protest, led by Voltaire, that the government paid the man's family an indemnity. The last Huguenot galley slaves were released from the French ship prisons in 1775. These things and others of like import, were tokens that the clays of general tribulation had been "shortened."

The time was at hand, then, for the first of the predicted signs to appear. Christ's great prophecy had said: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the Sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, mid the stars shall fall from heaven." Matthew 24:29.

THE DARKENING OF THE SUN

Most of the events heretofore fulfilling the divine forecasts had, naturally, taken place in the Old World, through which the tide of history flowed. But now a New World had come into being, a gathering-place of peoples of all nations; and these predicted signs in the heavens appeared there, to be heralded to all the world.

On May 19, 1780, in New England and neighboring States, occurred the famous Dark Day. It came "immediately after the tribulation of those days." Under "Dark Day," Noah Webster's Dictionary said: "So called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England. Birds sang their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; fowls went to roost; candles were lighted in the houses. The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known." - Edition of 1869.

A professor of Harvard University, Samuel Williams, professor of mathematics and philosophy, who observed it, wrote an elaborate account for the "Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences." A few words only will be sufficient; for none of the scientists of the day could tell any more about the cause than any other observer. He said:

"The time of this extraordinary darkness was May 19, 1780. It came on between the hours of ten and eleven a.m., and continued until the middle of the next night.

"The extent of this darkness was very remarkable. It seems to have extended all over the New England States. To the southward it was observed all along the sea-coasts, and to the north as far as our settlements extend. It is probable it extended much beyond these limits in some directions, but the exact boundaries cannot be ascertained by any observations that I have been able to collect.

"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." - Volume 1, pages 234, 235. Boston, 1785.

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A STATE LEGISLATURE DEBATES IT

In the Connecticut State Legislature, which was in session that day, one member moved to adjourn when darkness fell. Then the opinion of Colonel Abraham Davenport was asked, whereupon he rose and said:

"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." – "Connecticut Historical Collections," Barber, page 403.

This is the scene that Whittier painted with a poet's pen:

"It was on a May day of that 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.

"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 if 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 has 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.'"

Let men explain it as they may, the fact remains that the first of the signs in the heavens was hung out in that year, 1780.

"THE MOON SHALL NOT GIVE HER LIGHT"

This was fulfilled the night following the Dark Day, May 19, 1780. Although the moon had come to the full the day before; the darkness of the night was as uncanny and terrifying as that of the day.

Dr. Samuel Tenney, of New Hampshire, bore his testimony to the facts, in a letter dated December, 1785: "The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as ever has been observed since the Almighty fiat gave birth to light. It wanted only palpability to render it as extraordinary as that which overspread the land of Egypt in the days of Moses. I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes was equally invisible with the blackest velvet." – "Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society," Volume 1, 1792.

"THE STARS SHALL FALL FROM HEAVEN"

Before this sign appeared there had come a great awakening in the study of prophecy. The events attending the close of the years of papal supremacy, amidst the scenes of the French Revolution and the upheavals growing out of it, had given Bible students to understand that prophecy was fulfilling and that Christ's second coming was drawing near. Bible students were searching the prophetic scriptures, and now came the sign of the falling stars.

To this day, astronomical writers generally agree with C. G. Do Imadge, of the British Astronomical Association, in his statement concerning the falling stars: "Surpassing all displays of the kind ever seen, was that of November 13, 1833, when the meteors fell thick as snow flakes." "Astronomy of Today," page 270. London.

The falling of the stars was seen from Canada to Mexico. Professor Olmsted, of Yale University, wrote in the American Journal of Science and Arts: "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." - Volume XXV (1834), pages 363, 364.

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AS FORETOLD IN THE REVELATION

In the Book of Revelation, where these signs are also spoken of, the falling of the stars is described more minutely: "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.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened" (Fulfilled May 19, 1780), "and the stars shall fall from heaven." (Fulfilled November 13, 1833.) Matthew 24: 29.

A correspondent of the New York Journal of Commerce had this prophet's figure of the fig tree in mind when he described the event:

"And how did they fall? Neither myself nor one of the family heard any report; and were I to hunt through nature for a simile, I could not find one so apt to illustrate the appearance of the heavens as that which St. John uses in the prophecy, before quoted. 'It rained fire!' says one. Another, 'It was like a shower of fire.' Another, 'It was like the large flakes of falling snow before a coming storm, or large drops of rain before a shower.'

"I admit the fitness of these for common accuracy; but they come far short of the accuracy of the figure used by the prophet. 'The stars of heaven fell unto the earth'; they were not sheets, or flakes, or drops of fire; but they were what the world understands by the name of 'falling stars'; and one speaking to his fellow in the midst of the scene would say, 'See how the stars fall'; and he who heard, would not pause to correct the astronomy of the speaker, any more than he would reply, 'The sun does not move,' to one who should tell him, 'The sun is rising.'

"The stars fell 'even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of 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 the 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.

"Such was the appearance of the above phenomenon to the inmates of my house. I walked into the park with two gentlemen of Pearl Street, feeling and confessing that this scene had never been-figured to our minds by any book or mortal, save only by the prophet." - Saturday morning, November 16, 1833.

In those times many students of prophecy began to see that of a truth, the signs in the heavens foretold by Christ, and beginning exactly at the time predicted, had come to pass. These things gave added impetus to the study of prophecy and to the proclamation of the message of the second advent.

THE ASTRONOMERS' PREDICTIONS FAILED

True, it was said that displays of falling meteors had taken place before. But none such as this. In 1866 there was an unusual display in Europe which extended as far as Syria-though it was not to be compared with that of 1833. Men began to predict that these Leonids-as they were called because they seemed to come from the constellation Leo-would repeat their display every thirty three years. Thus in 1888 Professor S. P. Langley, of Washington, in his "New Astronomy," promised: "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." - Page 196.

The popular Chambers' "Astronomy," of England (published in 1889), said: "The meteors of November 13 may be expected to reappear with great brilliancy in 1899." - Volume 1, page 635.

But all these predictions failed, as have the many similar forecasts uttered now and then ever since. As the English writer, Agnes M. Clerke, says in "History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century": "We can no longer count upon the Leonids. Their glory, for scenic purposes, is departed." - Page 338. London, 1902.

Men cannot foretell these things. But on the Mount of Olives, nearly two thousand years ago, Christ's prophetic vision scanned the time from the fall of Jerusalem to His return in power and glory. He saw the ending of the days of papal persecution. And just there, He said, signs would be hung out in the heavens to let watchers know that the blessed day was approaching: "Immediately after the tribulation of

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those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven.”

The centuries passed, the days of tribulation ended, an era of greater liberty and enlightenment began to dawn; and just there, one following another – “immediately after the tribulation of those days” - the signs in the heavens began to signal their message to men. Those who “see” these things-seeing them as the signs that they are-are to lift up their heads with joy, knowing that the time of redemption “draws nigh.”

“O watchman on the mountain height,
Proclaim the coming day;
Behold the spires of golden fires
Mount upward on the way.

“Coming, yes, He's coming,
Let all the ransomed sing;
The hills are bright with holy light,
All hail the coming King!”

05. Signs In The Earth

NOT only were the signs of Christ's second advent to appear in the heavens, but events on earth were to proclaim the near approach of the great day.

In His prophetic forecast of signs both of the fall of Jerusalem and of His second coming in glory-Christ enumerated events and conditions on earth. Some of these things are marked on a small scale in the history of times preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. But on a far larger scale, a world scale, these things appear in our own day, as tokens following the signs in the heavens. Christ enumerated some of them as follows:

1. “Wars and rumors of wars.”
2. “There shall be famines.”
3. “And pestilences.”
4. “Iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”
5. A world missions movement: “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.

“WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS”

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” Verse 7.
“But,” one may say at once, “the world has always had wars. How then can wars be, a sign of the approaching advent?”

But evidently in the last days war was to increase to such destructive force that men might recognize it as one of the signs foretold by Christ. It will not do to ignore the sign, saying, These things have always been. Prophecy forewarns that that is what many will say: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” 2 Peter 3: 3, 4, 10.

That is the word of the Lord to men who see the conditions foretold, and who yet hear on every side the soothing cry that things have always been so. This very cry is a sign. It was to be heard all abroad in the last days, and so indeed we hear it today.

THINGS NOT “AS THEY WERE”

The fact is that all things do not “continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” In this matter of war we have seen things never seen on earth before. With the World War of 1914-1918 this old world turned a new corner in the history of man. Things have never been the same since. Breaking upon the nations like Jeremiah's “whirlwind from the coasts of the earth,” came “the rumbling storm Of great events, of nations sore distressed.”

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There was never anything like it. Winston Churchill wrote a book, "World Crisis," an intimate view of the first World War. He says: "The Great War through which we have passed differed from all ancient wars in the immense power of the combatants and their fearful agencies of destruction, and from all modern wars in the utter ruthlessness with which it was fought. All the horrors of all the ages were brought together, and not only armies but whole populations were thrust into the midst of them." - Volume 1, page 10.

Professor C. J. H. Hayes, of Columbia University (New York), says of the colossal proportions of that war: "Only nineteen independent states on the earth's surface preserved neutrality, and these were relatively small and unimportant. The Allies put nearly 40,000,000 men under arms, and the Central Powers nearly 20,000,000 - a total of almost 60,000,000! Of this huge number, at least 10,000,000 were killed and approximately 20,000,000 maimed for life. And these figures do not include civilians who perished from famine, disease, and massacre. For four years blood flowed like water, and material wealth was poured out similarly." - Current History, December, 1924.

One volume, "Why Wars Must Cease," compiled by a women's peace organization, says: "The Great War, which lasted only four years, was greater than the Thirty Years' War, greater than the Hundred Years' War, greater than the Napoleonic Wars, greater than all the wars of history put together, in its economic implications."

As everything in those days slipped over the brink into the seething cauldron, Kipling's nervous pen wrote:

"Our world has passed away In wanton overthrow;
There's nothing left today But steel and fire and woe!"

HOW COULD IT BE?

How could such a thing fall suddenly upon the nations in a time of high civilization, with peace conferences, and treaties, and talk of no more war for ever? In all Christendom there was, talk of beating swords into ploughshares.

But Scripture forewarns that the cry of peace and safety, so often raised in religious circles, will be a prelude to wars to the very end-when the final clash of Armageddon will come. The Apostle Paul foretells it in his description of the coming of the last crisis:

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4.

It was the sudden unexpectedness of the crisis of 1914 that staggered the imagination of men. In January, 1914, a British statesman had said that he thought the time was "the most favorable during the last twenty years!" for reducing the navy.

On August 1, the day after commitments that meant a general European war, the London Daily Telegraph commented on the "extraordinary rapidity" of the developments in a crisis "absolutely unparalleled" in this generation, "perhaps in the history of the world":

"It is this alarming violence, this remorseless haste, as of a tornado, that takes away our breath and paralyzes our thoughts. Human imagination is stunned by so sudden, so tremendous, and so unexpected a catastrophe."

MANY HEARTS THOUGHT OF IT AS A SIGN

Upon many a mind was thrust, thought of the descriptions of the last days in Scripture prophecy. Leslie's Illustrated Weekly (New York), not given to scriptural exposition, said:

"Is it surprising that some are inquiring if the end of all things is not approaching? The world may well be sobered by the thought." - March 1, 1917.

The missionary organ of the Church of England said: "Many see in the events preceding and accompanying this terrible cataclysm of war the signs of our Lord's near return." - Church Missionary Review, November, 1914 (London).

President Wilson, of the United States, in his war message to Congress, on December 4, 1917, said: "A supreme moment of history has come. The hand of God is laid upon the nations."

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The world recognized it as more than a clash of human weaknesses and national rancor. It was a sharp turn into a new era of international conditions, a sign that the stormy times foretold by Christ of the latter days had begun in earnest.

A NEW DAY IN MILITARY SCIENCE

The nineteenth century invented many things of military technique; but it has been left to our twentieth century to crown all the ages in preparations for destruction of human life. We saw it in those years of 1914-1918.

But when the new forces were but in their infancy, Mr. Lloyd George, wartime Premier of England, said a year after that war: "What would happen if you had another war baffles imagination. Discoveries made almost at the end of the war, if they had been used, would have produced horrors indescribable-discoveries by ourselves, discoveries by the French, discoveries by the Germans. Another year or two of war would have produced consequences which have only been described in works of fiction like the remarkable works of Mr. H. G. Wells.

And if, after years of devising and inventing, we still have another war with -new terrors that no man ever thought of at the beginning-because there were terrors at the end of this war that no one dreamed of at the beginning of the war if we are going to have a repetition of that, civilization might as well be wrecked and this world be driven to something-not the Middle Ages or the Dark Ages, because they did not produce annihilation-but to something that the world has never conceived in its most imaginative moments."-London Times, December 19, 1919.

BUT THE "NEXT WAR" CAME

The second World War (which opened in 1939) came sooner after the first World War than any of us thought possible. And at once it was apparent that all the forces of World War I would be multiplied.

We hardly realized until it began how everything had been speeded up in the meantime-in the air, on the earth in columns moving across a whole country at express speed, and in greatly increased range and powers of submarine destruction under the sea.

In the former war the use of wireless, on a large scale, was a new publicity marvel for wartime. Now it was the radio. In the early morning twilight of September 3, 1939, many lying in bed in America heard the pattering of children's feet on London's pavement as many thousands of school children were entrained for places of safety in the country. The voice of a little boy was heard calling, "Good-bye, mother; I'll be all right."

Thus the scenes in Europe were brought to our ears and our eyes as never in other days. If world-scale war is a sign of the end, as the Scripture says, the sign was given publicity in all the world. One journalist says of this:

"The second World War is being fought in a blaze of lights that runs with the speed of an electric current round the world. The shades may be drawn or the walls built high, but millions of human beings in every country may hear the thunder of guns. Into tens of millions of homes there come voices arguing, pleading, denouncing, explaining, relating. Into newspaper offices pour not only hundreds of thousands of words, but pictures that have leaped the ocean in almost the twinkling of an eye. Many of these things were impossible twenty-five years ago." R. L. Duffus, in New York Times.

It was with heavy hearts that observers and statesmen watched the trend toward world-wide extension of another colossal struggle. In those days the veteran Secretary of State of the United States, Cordell Hull, voiced the apprehensions of millions. He said:

"The specter of a new descent into the conditions of international anarchy which characterized the Dark Ages looms on the horizon today. I am profoundly convinced that it menaces the civilized existence of mankind of every nation and every individual. We cannot close our eyes to what is going on elsewhere in the world and delude ourselves with the mere hope that somehow somehow-all this will pass us by. Never in our national history has there been a more desperate need for a clear understanding by every responsible citizen of our country of what is taking place in the world and of how it affects us. Stunned by the cruel events which unfold all around them, millions of men and women have become a prey to doubt, hopelessness, and despair."

Signs Of Christ's Coming

“MANKIND NEVER IN THIS POSITION BEFORE”

From the beginning of the second conflict, it appeared to bear out the forecast that Mr. Winston Churchill wrote in his book, “Aftermath,” published a few years after the former war. He said:

“It is established that henceforth whole populations will take part in war, all doing their utmost, all subjected to the fury of the enemy. It is established that nations who believe their life is at stake will not be restrained from using any means to secure their existence. It is probable—nay, certain—that among the means that will next time be at their disposal will be agencies and processes of destruction wholesale, unlimited, and perhaps, once launched, uncontrollable.

“Mankind has never been in this position before. Without having improved appreciably in virtue or enjoying wiser guidance, it has got into its hands for the first time tools by which it can unfailingly accomplish its own extermination. That is the point in human destinies to which all the glories and toils of men have at last led them. Death stands at attention, obedient, expectant, ready if called on to pulverize, without hope of repair, what is left of civilization. He awaits only the word of command.” - Page 483.

No wonder our Lord, on the Mount of Olives, with prophetic vision sweeping all the future, named “wars and rumors of wars” as a sign that His second coming is near at hand.

PLOUGHSHARES TURNED INTO SWORDS

The sure Word of prophecy pictures a warlike world to the end. True, we are told that “it shall come to pass in the last days, that many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; and He will teach us of His ways. And He shall judge among the nations: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Isaiah 2: 2-4.

But this is what “many people” will be saying. The prophecy tells what the world will actually be doing. It will be turning the ploughshares, the products of the field, into armaments. And by so doing the world will be saying: “Proclaim you this among the Gentiles [the nations]; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up; beat your ploughshares 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 [“threshing,” margin]: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. But the Lord will be the hope of His people [or, as the margin puts it, “the place of repair,” or “harbor”].” Joel 3: 9-16.

The refuge and hope of the world is in the second coming of the Lord. That will bring an end to wars and distresses. Christ surely spoke this great prophecy, outlining these events, in order that we may find in Him the harbor of refuge, safe amidst the storm.

06. Signs In The Physical World

“WHEN you shall see all these things,” said Christ, “know that He is near, even at the doors.” Matthew 24: 33, margin. That is the bright side of the distressful conditions that He describes as preceding the second coming. The world is sadly worn, with the reign of sin. It affects the very elements. One might question that. How could sin affect this material earth? But back of sin, a destroying element, is the originator of sin. Satan is the destroyer.

THE ELEMENTS UNDER THE CURSE

In the beginning, when Satan lured man into sin, a curse was brought upon the earth. It is not that God arbitrarily cursed the earth. Sin itself, in an originally perfect creation, has wrought trouble for man and brought disintegration and ruin upon the earth itself. The Apostle Paul represents the earth itself as waiting for the day of restoration: “We know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” Romans 8: 22.

One thinks of the earth as unchanging, but the Lord says; “The earth shall wax old like a garment.” Isaiah 51: 6.

The conditions that Christ described as signs of His near coming show that truly this old world is sadly worn. And the human race is attacked by multiple forms of physical dangers. This leads us to other of the signs foretold by Christ in the great prophetic outline of Mount Olivet.

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“AND PESTILENCES.” MATTHEW 24: 7

One of the gifts of Providence to this age of increase of knowledge has been increased knowledge in medical and sanitary science. This has led to the prolonging of millions of lives. No one can be guiltless who does not study to learn how to care for health. Our bodies are not our own. “You are bought with a price.” “Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10: 31.

Yet with all this advancement of knowledge, we must confess that pestilences can sweep the earth in our time. Dr. Hollis Godfrey, president of the Engineering-Economics Foundation of America, made public this list of deaths by calamities, covering the time of World War I and but a few years following:

War	9,000,000
Epidemics	40,000,000
Famine	5,000,000
Earthquakes	500,000
Floods	500,000
Tidal Waves	500,000
Tornadoes	500,000

The terrible harvest of pestilences or epidemics overtopped war itself. Who, looking at this, does not think of the visitation of influenza that sprang out of the closing wartime in 1918? It did not look so serious. But it accounted for a large proportion of the huge total of epidemic fatalities printed above. “This pandemic,” said the post-war edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, “swept over the world in three successive waves.” No one yet knows how it leaped in to the remotest spots on earth, where no human carriers took it. It was said that only the islands of St. Helena and Mauritius, in the far southern seas, escaped it. Again and again in these visitations we are left to face the fact that Satan, the destroyer, is working with great power, knowing “that he has but a short time.” Revelation 12: 12.

As “wars and rumors of wars” constitute in our day a sign, so out of the first World War, in some mysterious way, sprang world-sweeping pestilences that answer also to the sign that Christ foretold. The English author, Sir Hall Caine, wrote soon after the Great War: “The war has added to the number of the world’s diseases. For reasons the human mind cannot fathom, death lies in wait for man in the earth, the water, and the air. But, 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 of the earth, full of human remains, the war of the last four years has apparently liberated innumerable diseases which are now sweeping through the world. Many of these diseases are unknown, and it will be generations, perhaps centuries, before they can be conquered. Meantime through the years of peace death will stalk in the footsteps of the war, claiming its victims by thousands and tens of thousands.” - Hearst’s Magazine, January, 1919.

Men know that these things have come upon the world with a new revelation of destroying power, sufficient to clearly constitute a sign of the times. The London Fortnightly Review, declaring that we were watching the “disruption of the world” that seemed so secure in prewar times, said: “Pestilence followed war, famine over vast tracts has followed pestilence. -And no man or woman who has lived through these five years but knows in his or her heart that the old careless pre-war world lies dead, that throughout the present world subversive forces of evil are striving for liberation.” - October, 1922.

“THERE SHALL BE FAMINES.” MATTHEW 24: 7

One might think serious famine could hardly come in these times of international transportation and interchange of goods. Famines there have been in all history. It was famine in Syria and Egypt that sent Jacob and his sons down to buy corn stored in Egyptian corn pits by their long-lost Joseph. But these things were to be so severe in the last days as to constitute a sign.

In the prophecy this sign is associated with “wars and rumors of wars.” War conditions have contributed to famine conditions and hindered relief efforts. Famines destroyed millions in China in the days of revolution and civil war that turned the old monarchy into a republic. When America was perplexed over a huge crop surplus, it was estimated that four millions died of hunger in North-west China. With the land torn by war and banditry, no mass movements of food could be undertaken by relief agencies.

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And there was Russia. Following Great War I and the great revolution, the severest famine in the history of that country came. Only a little while before, the people had marched singing to the tune of the spirited Marseillaise of the French Revolution:

“Let us give up the ancient world,
Let us shake its dust from our feet.
We want no idol in gold.
We will go to our suffering brethren.
We will go to those who are starving.
March! March! Workmen, forward!”

But within a few months famine's gaunt hand had laid hold of whole provinces in Russia. Dr. Nansen of Norway, the famed Arctic explorer, headed the international relief effort in 1921-1922. He wrote that the famine was “beyond all doubt the most appalling that has ever happened in the recorded history of man.”

“Millions died in the torture of hunger during the famine. Thousands upon thousands went mad from pain before the end. Cannibalism was rife throughout a population as great as that of the States of New York, Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.” - Current History, July, 1929.

TWO OR THREE MILLIONS PERISHED

Relief efforts extended to the Armenians, a million of these being wiped out by famine. Dr. Nansen laid much of the weight of blame upon the war, which had disrupted social conditions. If a “next war” is allowed to come, he declared, “it will certainly be the end of white civilization.”

MAN NEEDS THE CREATOR

When the rains refused to come in Russia over whole districts, one official—an old man who had taken part in public repudiations of God, after the manner of the French Revolution—said to a missionary friend of mine who was suffering, too, with her neighbors: “I am afraid we have made a mistake. We have voted God away. But we can't make it rain. I fear we made a mistake. We need a God who can send rain.”

A man with a Russian name—Raymond Keresensky wrote of a lesson that he had learned:

“To plough and drag the stubble field
Behind a heaving, sweating team,
And then in autumn take the yield
Of yellow grain: This was my scheme
Of things. I dug the sod,
What need was there of God?”

“A plough and reaper, things like these
Had made me great. I had no need
For prayers and solemn liturgies.
I had a million mouths to feed.
I had to turn the sod;
To me there was no God.”

Then the skies failed, and out of it the poet-farmer learned that he needed the living God as Partner in his toil. In the midst of latter-day calamities many of us may learn lessons of dependence upon God. “When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” Isaiah 26: 9.

But the prophet Isaiah sadly added: “Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.” Verse 10.

Signs Of Christ's Coming

YET GREATER LOSSES

In 1933, a still more disastrous hunger year, almost unheard of in the West, came to Russia. An American engineer in Russian service, in charge of welfare work in a great tractor plant, called on an official to learn what to say to the workmen who were unsettled by news of famine in some parts. He says: "Comrade Petrovsky," I said, "the men at our" factory are saying that seven or eight millions of peasants have died from the famine all over Russia."

"Only five million have died this year," Petrovsky observed casually." - Fred E. Beal, in Baltimore News, July 13, 1935.

From 1928 to 1930 the hunger death, information regarding which was not widespread in the Western World, swept north-western China. The China Famine Relief organization reported it: "A human tragedy greater and more terrible than any the world has ever known. More than 12,000,000 people have starved to death." - Washington News, October 15, 1931.

"There shall be famines," said Christ, viewing the last days in prophetic vision. The signs show that those days have begun.

"EARTHQUAKES, IN DIVERS PLACES." MATTHEW 24: 7

The most destructive earthquakes concerning which we have accurate historical information have come in modern times-in fact, in very modern times. No more appalling manifestation of earth movements has been known than that march of great mountains over villages and valleys in Kansu, North-west China, in 1920. "The mountains walked in the night," said the survivors. A hundred thousand were buried.

What one authority describes as "the greatest single disaster since the Flood," came upon Yokohama and Tokyo, Japan, by the earthquake of 1923.

One journalist observer in North America, A. L. Baker, in his book, "Hope of the World," says of modern earthquakes compared with ancient ones (based on a list given by Nelson's Loose-Leaf Encyclopedia): "This list begins with an earthquake in China in the year AD 1038, and comes down to the Japanese catastrophe of 1923. One significant observation to be made from this list is the fact that during the fifty years beginning with 1875, there were more severe earthquakes than in the 850 years preceding." "Our age is pre-eminent in the number and severity of earthquakes. No other epoch is even a close rival in this phenomenon of nature. Without doubt Christ was looking forward to this time when He declared that 'great earthquakes shall be in divers places.'" -Pages 57, 59.

The prophecy foretold that amidst these times hearts would fail "for fear." The Associated Press, reporting an earthquake that destroyed towns in Italy, in 1930, said that the terror of the quake was "so sharp and frightful that the number of deaths from fright in Naples alone was estimated at fifty." Yet Naples was outside the zone of destruction.

In the first months of World War II, on December 27, 1939, the worst disaster in Turkey's long history of earthquakes slew 20,000. As the New York Times then said, the disaster was little noted abroad. We quote: "If this disaster, among the greatest of its kind on record, had occurred at almost any other time but the present, the world would have been shocked and horrified by its dimensions. But in the midst of disaster of modern war the world has become too callous, too inured to shock, to feel the Turkish catastrophe as it would once have felt it."

The pitiful story rolls out before us from year to year, until it seems truly that "Final Ruin fiercely drives Her ploughshares o'er creation." -Young.

VOLCANIC ACTIVITY

Earthquakes are classed with volcanic activity. The prophet Joel may include these smoking earth furnaces in his, picture of last-day signs: "Wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." Joel 2:30, 31.

Of the eruption of the West Indian volcano, Soufriere, in 1902, an eyewitness said: "The stupendous pillar of smoke and fire fascinated one by its awful grandeur."

"Fire, and pillars of smoke," said the prophecy. The explosion of Krakatoa, in the strait of Sunda, Dutch East Indies, in 1883, is called "the hugest cataclysm since the Deluge." The pillar of fire and smoke and dust and vapour was estimated to be twenty miles high. One author says: "At night the canopy illuminated by the light of the volcano resembled a blood-red curtain." - "Volcanoes of North America," J. C. Russell, page 25.

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Older people will remember the blood-red sunsets that persisted for several years following. They were supposed to have been caused by the red volcanic dust left in the atmosphere when "the air wave pulsed round the world four times to the antipodes and three times back." – "Sources of Volcanic Energy," J. C. Salley, page 119.

These terrific displays bid us find refuge in God against that final sign when not earth only, but "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: 26, 27.

Unbelief may say: "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Peter 3: 4.

Inspiration says that some will be saying this "in the last days." And some do say it. In repeating the very words foretold, they themselves, are signs that the last times are come.

But the fact is that these things that Christ cited as signs are not things that have been since the beginning of creation. In our day have come:

The two greatest wars in the history of man.

The greatest fatalities by pestilence ever known.

The greatest famines' ever known.

The most destructive earthquakes of all time.

These are signs by which men may know that the second advent of Christ draws near.

07. Signs in the Religious and Social Worlds

THIS is one of the signs, a letting down religiously at the very time, above all times, when men are exhorted to be awake and trusting in the living God. Christ said of the times before His second coming: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matthew 24: 12, 13.

Again and again Scripture prophecy represents the last days as days of decay of faith. Christ asks: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18: 8.

UNBELIEF LIKE A FLOOD

One of the signs of our times is the tide of unbelief that has swept over Christendom. Rabbi Wise, of New York, looking at Christendom as well as Jewry, says that unbelief now is not something unique and spectacular like Voltaire's rationalism in the eighteenth century, or Ingersoll's atheism in the nineteenth. Today's unbelief, he finds, is normal and well-nigh universal. He says:

"The religious indifference of today is not unique. It does not stand out. It is not the foible of a smart set of hyper-educated intellectuals. It is the accepted fact rather than the pronounced heresy of the lives of millions, and these millions, be it noted, the most thoughtful and intelligent in all lands.

"For religion, as it has been presented to them, is based on belief. And they simply do not believe."-The Century Magazine, July, 1926.

"Shall He find faith on the earth" when He comes? The enemy of faith has wrought his master work in these days just before the Lord is to appear.

The American educator, James Truslow-Adams, well known essayist and student of life and conditions, sums up the rapid progress of this spirit of unbelief in recent years. "In the 1880's," he says, "there was belief in the Bible as the inspired Word of God." "The older generation was taught that God gave certain commands." (As the Ten Commandments.) "It is useless," he says, "to tell that to a young person today." "We of the older generation have played with ideas and let loose forces the power of which we little dreamed of. We have, indeed, sowed the wind, and it will be those of the younger generation who will reap the whirlwind unless they can control it.

"They have inherited perhaps the biggest mess and biggest problem that was ever bequeathed by one generation to another. Never has the road been wilder or the signposts fewer."-Atlantic Monthly, November, 1926.

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THE NEW PAGANISM

We add one testimony more, from one of the class who reject the divine authority of Holy Scripture. It is from a university professor who teaches in a school that still bears the name "Wesleyan," after a man whom God used so powerfully in reviving religious life from the formality that was upon it in the days of rationalism in Europe.

This university man sees the tendency of religious people to compromise with science, so called, where it assumes to explain away the idea of a creation by the word of God. But he says that is not enough. He tells what the scientific spirit of the age demands:

"Religion claims to possess divine truth, or rather a divine way to truth. It cannot give "this up and remain religion. And science demands no less than the unconditional surrender of this claim to truth." - Scientific Monthly, November, 1926.

This is the spirit permeating many educational centers where the youth are trained for their lifework. At a Baltimore convention of the Lutheran body (U.S.A.), Dr. Paul Krauss described the cult of unbelief in these words:

"There is a general tendency toward skepticism in our secular institutions of education, a skepticism that breeds cynicism.

"The most dangerous element in our American life is in industrial cities, not in the agricultural sections, nor in Washington. The most dangerous spot in American life is to be found in the field of secular education.

"The greatest enemy of Christianity is the godless professor. He may be sincere in searching after the truth, but there is no wisdom apart from God."-New York Times, October 9, 1938.

It is the same cultured paganism, hopeless and helpless and dark, that the apostles met when they went out into the Roman world of the first century. Only it is in new dress. It may commend Scripture as literature of a high order; it extols Christ; but as for holding Holy Scripture as the directly inspired voice of the living God to men, that old-fashioned faith is disappearing.

When Christ asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" He surely had in mind the only kind of living faith there is.

This is faith: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10: 17. We admire the spirit of research, and marvel at the facts discovered by scientists in modern times. It is a part of the providential provision by which, this age has seen the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy of the "time of the end": "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Daniel 12: 4.

But science has not the remotest qualification for discussing the ways of creative power. The laboratory may determine every element in a seed-except the life! Not all the laboratories on earth could produce one living seed of corn. God alone can do that. And when science tries to find a substitute for the creative power of God, the Creator looks down from heaven and asks:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer you Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Job 38: 2-4.

THE OLD BOOK STANDS

Religion to a great extent has tried to conform the Bible to the claims of modern scientific unbelief, and has ended by putting out the light of Holy Scripture. Cowper said it exactly right long ago, when this program was first beginning:

"Thus men go wrong with an ingenious skill, Bend the straight rule to their own crooked will; And with a clear and shining lamp supplied, First put it out, then take it for a guide."

It is the inspiration of the living God that puts the everlasting light into Holy Scripture. Without faith, faith in the living God who speaks with authority from heaven in these pages-the letter of the Book is but as the word of man, void of power. Through the written words faith makes contact with eternal power. It is like the trolley on the electric tram that touches the current that works all the mechanism. The touch brings the power into the works. The faith that touches the living God in His' Word, brings the power, actual working of divine creative power, into heart and life.

That is how the Apostle Paul could write to the Thessalonians, who had turned from idols to serve the living and true God: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." 1 Thessalonians 2: 13.

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That is why the evil one is making his last stand against the divine authority and integrity of Holy Scripture. It is by these words that God works in the lives of those who believe. "He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33: 9.

Creative power is in the words of God. It is not mere instruction that we need. We must have the new heart, a new life from above. We need the power to create in us what is not there at all. Ages ago Mencius, the Chinese sage, said truly: "Instruction can impart information, but not the power to execute."

Power to create anew is man's need-power that will put sin out and put righteousness within; and that power comes by faith only in the living Word of the living Christ who died for sinful man. That is why Satan is working in these last days to dethrone the supreme authority of the inspired Scriptures in the minds of this generation. But the Old Book stands, as it has stood through the ages, "A tower of strength That stood foursquare to every wind that blew."

PERILOUS TIMES

The times have come of which the apostle wrote: "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, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

The times are perilous to us all, because this spirit is in our natural flesh. Only the power of Christ can deliver any one of us from it; and that power is received by faith in the Word of God. That is why this modern setting aside of the Holy Scripture, making it a good inspiring book, but a humanly written book, is cutting the very nerve of true religious experience. "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power."

"Lovers of pleasures." And the rush of pleasure seeking goes on no matter what happens, even as it did when ancient Rome was falling. The early Christian writer, Orosius, quotes a Roman as saying when the Goths were at the gates: "If the games of the circus were kept up, he didn't care what happened to Rome." - "King Alfred's Books," G. E. Browne, page 97.

"Disobedient to parents," "without natural affection." Thank God for the multitudes of home-trained children of today who are an honor to parents. God bless the godly parents.

"Happy the home where Jesus' name
Is sweet to every ear;
Where children early list His fame,
And parents hold Him dear."

God bless the old-fashioned home that is truly a house of God, "where prayer" is "wont to be made." But from all sides come testimonies that the decadence of the old-fashioned home training is an ominous symptom of these times. An experienced educator writes: "The disrespect and careless attitude of children toward their parents is not a recent matter; but the disregard and neglect of parents, who pursue their own pleasures with little consideration of their duties to their children, is a phenomenon of recent development. These conditions are found not only among the latest generation, the older group as well is swept along." - Beatrice M. Hinkle, M.D., Harper's Magazine, December, 1925.

The signs foretold are all about, beacon: signals that the day of Christ's coming is drawing near. "Therefore be ye also ready," Jesus said; "for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:44.

"Therefore be ye also ready," says Christ. Every day we are to know that all sins are forgiven. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2: 1. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

"The wonders of redeeming love
Our highest thoughts exceed;
The Son of God came from above
For sinful man to bleed.

"And now before His Father's face
His precious blood He pleads;
For those who seek a throne of grace

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His love still intercedes.

“He knows the frailties’ of our frame,
For He has borne our grief;
Our great High Priest once felt the same
And He can send relief.

“His love will not be satisfied
Till He in glory see
The faithful ones for whom
He died From sin for ever free.”
-Cottrell.

08. Distress of Nations With Perplexity

NOT only were signs to appear in the heavens, but events on earth were to preach the near approach of the great day. In Luke's report of the Savior's outline of prophecy, we read of the very last signs: “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.

Here are world conditions, foretold as signs-conditions that were to prevail in the earth in the last days.

“DISTRESS OF NATIONS”

Once most of us, perhaps, interpreted this distress as describing the loss of life and property in war. But we have lived to see the literal fulfillment of this prophecy in other than wartime. We saw it in the times of distress and perplexity that leaped down suddenly upon the world in the great depression of 1930 and onward.

No doubt it came as one of the results of the first World War, out of the destruction of lives and values and the dislocation of everything in that time. But out of a clear sky depression fell upon all nations. It was something new in its nature and magnitude, a sign that stands out by itself—a “distress of nations,” exactly as described by Christ on the Mount of Olives.

At a great mass meeting in the Royal Albert Hall, London, in 1932, the former Prince of Wales made use of the very language of the prophecy in describing world conditions. He said: “We have before us a world sick with fearful doubt. A world of troubled nations. In almost every land widespread distress and perplexity.” - Speech of June 27, 1932.

“Distress of nations, with perplexity,” the prophecy foretold. “Widespread distress and perplexity,” said the royal prince. No one could explain it. Montagu Norman, governor of the Bank of England, said in a Mansion House speech to bankers: “Confused affairs of the world have brought about a series of events and a general tendency which appears to me at this time as being outside the control of any man and any government and any country.”-Quoted in Signs of the Times, November 22, 1932. Thus there suddenly dropped down upon all the world a time of “distress of nations.”

“MEN'S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR”

This scripture expresses a characteristic of the times that have followed the first World War. In that war the world entered a new era of “fear.”

Note the calendar of the years since that Great War, as represented here by a few spokesmen for apprehensive mankind:

1919.

“The future fills me with dread.”-David Lloyd George, wartime Premier.

“Europe is haunted by -a thousand fears.”-Sir Philip Gibbs, in “Day After Tomorrow.”

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1920.

The "Rational Press Annual," publication of British rationalism, said: "Not since the collapse of the ancient world have men's minds failed them for fear, as they are failing them in the presence of the immeasurable desolation upon which we look today."

1925.

"Not since Christ was born in Bethlehem have the stars looked down upon a world more filled with anxiety and fear."-Los Angeles Examiner, January 16, 1925.

1927.

"The cloud of black fear hangs over all the world." -New York Christian Herald.

1932.

"The whole world seems to be quaking with fear." - Lady Oxford, in "More Memories."

1933.

Mr. Baldwin, former Prime Minister, in a speech at Edinburgh: "At this moment many men's hearts are failing them because of the difficulties that lie ahead." London Times, November 18, 1933.

1938.

The Archbishop of Canterbury (England), at diocesan conference, July 11:

"It sometimes looks, the world over, as if it were, for the present, under the dominion of evil spirits. One of the chief of these evil spirits is the spirit of fear. I know of no words that can describe better the world situation at the present time than the familiar words: 'Men's hearts failing them for fear.'"

Is it not clear that ever since the first World War, we have been living under a cloud of fear among the nations which marks this as the time to which Christ's prophecy points?

"LOOKING AFTER THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMING"

"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." That is the ground of the fear that oppresses the hearts of thoughtful men. What is coming? Men of affairs tell us that other wars are coming; that the "war to end war" prepared the ground for other wars. Let statesmen and writers of international repute tell it, beginning with the days just after the close of World War I:

1919.

Alfred Noyes (London): "Practical men, with their feet planted solidly on the earth, are looking into the future as into an immeasurable darkness." -Saturday Evening Post, April 22, 1919.

Signor Mussolini (Italy): "It seems to me that the twentieth-century people are destined to live in a gloomy period of history, in an age clouded by tragedy."

1929.

Ex-Prime Minister Lloyd George (England): "The future fills me with dread. 'I am afraid of what will happen. I honestly don't believe European civilization could survive another great war.'"

1938.

Ex-Premier Baldwin (England): "The world cannot for ever continue plunging from crisis to crisis." - Washington Star, September 10, 1938.

Ex-Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain (England): "When I look round the world, I must say I am appalled at the prospects." - Speech, July 2, 1938.

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THWARTED EFFORTS FOR PEACE

Through all these years of storm and stress, we have seen able statesmen working for peace. Yet the winds of violence have burst forth. How is it? The prophet John, on Patmos, was shown the influences making for wars.

Unable to look into the future, great statesmen grope in darkness in search of a glimmer of hope for the world. The curtain was drawn aside, and he saw Satan with his evil angels who fell with him going forth to stir up the spirit of strife in the latter days. Revelation 16: 14.

Earnest statesmen have felt some baleful influence frustrating their purposes. The veteran Marquis of Salisbury, when Prime Minister of Britain, long before the first World War, in almost his last speech, in defense of increased armaments, cried out: "For years public opinion was in favor of a pacific policy, but now that state of opinion has passed away. The tide has turned, and who am I, and who are we, that we should attempt to stem the tide? We are in the presence of forces far larger than we can wield."

Sir Edward Grey, foreign secretary when World War I broke, had said of these influences a little while before: "It is really as if in the atmosphere of the world there were some mischievous influence at work, which troubles and excites every part of it."

Who is the agent that spreads this spirit that wise statesmen have tried to overcome by treaties and pacts these years? One veteran of the former world conflict, the late Mr. Lloyd George, once sagely replied to talk about ending all war: "Was the devil numbered among the slain in the last war? I have never seen his name in any casualty list. There is in the background the sinister figure of that force of mischief which used to be known by our Puritan forefathers as the devil."

One more word from the late Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, twice Prime Minister of Britain. He said of the influences that so soon after the first World War were already pushing the nations into increasing armaments: "It would seem as if they were all bewitched, or laboring under some doom imposed upon them by devils. People are beginning to feel that there is something devilish in the operations now going on to increase armies, navies, and air forces."-The Times (London), July 24, 1923.

All who have watched the struggles of statesmen to allay differences and avert the catastrophe of another almost universal war, know that they have made a sincere effort. But they found themselves, as Lord Salisbury cried out, in the presence of forces larger than they could wield.

The late Rear-Admiral Thomas P. Magruder, of the United States Navy, at the Intercollegiate Parley, in Middletown, Connecticut, March 30, 1938, said a true thing: "Disarmament cannot take place until mankind fears God and keeps His commandments."

That is an experience for the individual believer. Only by faith can anyone keep God's commandments, by Christ's indwelling life within. And that is the gospel message that the Lord is sending to mankind amid the clash of nations and the noise of war.

He cries: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14.

PRAY FOR THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

Above all the tumult, we may know that the God of mercy and of truth is enthroned. We may hold to the assurances that He will bring about His everlasting kingdom. Events show that the time is drawing near. It was in speaking of these signs of His second coming that Christ said:

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Matthew 24: 35.

There is something to cling to when everything of earth seems crumbling. Loyal every Christian is to pray for his leaders in civil life – "for kings, and for all that are in authority." But not all the distractions of war and the "distress of nations, with perplexity," should dim our hope of the triumph of Christ's gospel in all the world-the cause that will bring the end of war and strife and sin and death. For Christ has said, and of this very time when His coming draws near:

"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.

"THE SEA AND THE WAVES ROARING." LUKE 21: 25

What this may mean for the future we know not; but in tidal waves and typhoons and hurricanes "roaring" from off the seas and over the lands, we have had sufficient in recent times to know that this sign is in process of fulfilling. About the year 1926 two forecasts were made by scientists:

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Sir Oliver Lodge said: "Without doubt it will soon be possible for science to control the weather."

Then from France came a forecast: "One of the foremost French scientists recently said: 'Control of the weather is a possibility of the future.'" *Woman's Home Companion*, November, 1926.

It seemed that in the years immediately following these predictions the elements were abroad in greater fury than ever before. In America just afterward, year following year, the Red Cross reported disasters, mainly by storm and flood, cloudbursts and drought, and dust storms (a new calamity), "greater in number than in any previous year since the organization." The French fishermen of the North Atlantic "averred," said the Associated Press, "that the North Atlantic had 'gone crazy.'"

The elements smote suffering China in 1931 with such a flood that the Associated Press described it as "the greatest calamity of modern times." The *London Times* called it "the worst flood in human memory." The Gulf shores of America have heard the "roaring" of sea and waves in destructive hurricanes taking heavier toll than ever. -More recently the worst storm known on the northern American coasts came "shrieking" out of the sea over Long Island and New England. The magazine *Time* said: "Never has a hurricane struck a region so thickly populated and so unprepared." - October 3, 1938.

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." "Look up, and lift up Luke 21:27, for your redemption draws nigh."

The prophecy uttered on the Mount of Olives in AD 31 described our times more accurately than the predictions of the scientists in 1926. No; science has no prospect of learning to "control the weather." Rather "When were the winds let slip with such a warrant to destroy? When did the waves so haughtily overleap their ancient barrier, deluging the dry? Fires from beneath, and meteors from above, portentous, unexampled, unexplained, have kindled beacons in the skies. The old and crazy earth has had her shaking fits more frequent, and forgone her usual rest: and nature seems with dim and sickly eye to wait the close of all."

AND WHAT NEXT?

Thank God, there is a brighter outlook above. Christ's prophecy does not end with the "distress of nations, with perplexity," and the "fear" in hearts that are "looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

The next thing, in Christ's great outline of prophecy, is the glorious coming of the Lord: "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 21:26-28.

09. The Brightest Sign of All

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.

So Christ's great prophecy foretold. True to the "sure Word of prophecy," this has been the age of world-wide evangelism. We can scarcely credit today the indifference and opposition, even in religious circles, that the pioneers of world missions had to meet. William Carey, preacher, shoemaker, in England, was a delegate to a Baptist ministers' convention in 1786. He rose and asked the convention why the command of Christ, to go into all the world and teach all nations, should not be accepted as the duty of the church.

Dr. Ryland, the presiding officer, rebuked him:

"Sit down, young man. You are a miserable enthusiast to ask such a question. When God wants to convert the world, He can do it without your help; and at least nothing can be done until a second Pentecost."

This was the same Dr. Ryland who later said, after the movement began to bear fruit: "I believe God Himself infused into the mind of Carey that solicitude for the salvation of the heathen which cannot be fairly traced to any other source."

The hour of the prophecy had struck. No opposition could turn Carey from the way. He was the chosen agent for the hour. He studied and wrote and prayed for light to know how to press the appeal for missions more clearly and powerfully upon the conscience of Christendom.

"So he goes on day after day," said Mrs. Carey to Roland Evans, in the little Harvey Lane shop in Leicester, "hammering and reading, reading and hammering."

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THE SPARK THAT SET OFF THE BLAZE

Carey, standing with leathern apron, turned to Evans and spoke of a sermon he was to deliver at the coming ministers' meeting at Nottingham.

"Here is the manuscript of it," he said. "God spoke to me as I wrote it. I am praying that it will end in the founding of a society in our denomination for the spreading of the light of the gospel to the heathen peoples."

That was the history-making sermon on the text: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Isaiah 54: 2, 3.

The Lord did answer Carey's prayer. Out of that sermon, with its two main heads, "Expect great things from God," "Attempt great things for God," came the beginning of modern world evangelization. "It was a spark dropped from heaven," said James Montgomery, the poet. "It was the burning bush of missionary revelation," said another. Carey and an associate sailed for India in 1792, opening the Baptist mission. At once other churches awoke.

THE MIRACLE OF THE NEW LIFE

The miracle of missions is the miracle of the changed life. It is the miracle of God's intervening hand. Sometimes it is the use of the simplest -everyday incidents to start the up springing of a new life.

The story of missions is full of the marvels of God's overruling providences and transforming grace. You have heard the story of the sailors who were shipwrecked many years ago in the South Pacific. Making their way by their small boat, to an island, they crept up a hill to look over into a clearing where evidently was a village. Their fear was that the savages would kill and eat them. Creeping cautiously to the crest of the hill, and looking anxiously over, they saw-unmistakably-a Christian chapel in the village, bearing a good imitation of a steeple. Relief and joy filled their hearts. They knew they were safe. Believers themselves, or unbelievers, they knew the signs of the religion that transforms savages. Cannibalism and a church steeple could never go together!

John Williams himself met with a surprise as he once approached the island of Tutuila. After he had put off in his small boat, The crowd on the shore looked so formidable that he asked his men to stop rowing, and had a season of prayer-his custom when approaching danger. Twenty yards from the shore the chief waded out to the boat.

"Son," he said, 'will you not come onshore? Will you not land among us?'

"To this I replied," says Williams, 'I do not know that I should trust myself. I have heard a sad account of you in this bay-that you have taken two boats, and that you are exceedingly savage; and perhaps when you get me into your possession, you will either injure my person or demand a ransom for my release.'

"Oh," he shouted, 'we are not savage now; we are Christians.'

"You Christians?" I said. 'Where did you hear of Christianity?'

"Oh," he exclaimed, 'a great chief from the white man's country, named Williams, came to Savaii about twenty moons ago, and placed some tama-fai-lotu [workers of religion] there, and several of our people who were there began on their return to instruct their friends, many of whom have become sons of the Word. There they are; don't you see them?'

"Looking in the direction to which he pointed, I saw a group of about fifty persons seated under the wide spreading branches of large palm and other trees, apart from those whom he had ordered to sit down along the beach. Everyone of this group had a piece of white cloth tied around his arm. I inquired of the chief what this meant, and he replied, 'They are Christians, and that cloth is to distinguish them from their heathen countrymen.'

"Why," I immediately exclaimed, 'I am the person you allude to; my name is Williams. I took the workers of religion to Savaii twenty moons ago.'

"The moment he heard this he made a signal to the multitude, who sprang from their seats, rushed to the sea, seized the boat, and carried both it and us to the shore. Upon landing, Amoamo, the chief, took me by the hand and conducted me to the Christians, and after the usual salutations, I inquired where they had heard of Christianity. Upon this, one of their number, rather more forward than his brethren, replied

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that he had been down to the 'workers of religion,' had brought back some knowledge, and was now engaged in imparting it to his countrymen.

“‘There is our chapel,’ said he; ‘don’t you see it?’

“WHAT CAN ONE MAN DO?”

Just after David Livingstone had planted his first station on the edge of Bechuanaland, in 1844, he felt upon his soul the burden, “Who will penetrate Africa?” Erelong he set his face toward the interior to spend his life in geographical explorations, hoping to open trails for commerce, and above all for missions. “But what can one man do?” friends questioned doubtfully.

“I don’t know,” replied Livingstone, “but if no one goes in first, no one will ever follow.”

He himself never knew the marvelous results that God brought out of that life spent alone in the wilds. It is one of the miracles of missions. His constant prayer was that somehow God would use his work to open paths to the tribes and tongues of the interior. When facing death from the savages on the Zambezi, in 1856, he wrote in his journal: “O Jesus, grant me resignation to Thy will, and entire reliance on Thy powerful hand. But wilt Thou permit me to plead for Africa? What an impulse will be given to the idea that Africa is not open if I perish now! Leave me not, forsake me not.”

Again on his last birthday but one, in 1872, he wrote in his journal:

“My Jesus, my King, my life, my all; I again dedicate my whole self to Thee. Accept me, and grant, O gracious Father, that ere this year is gone I may finish my task.”

His last task, the finding of the source of the Congo, he hoped would close the geographical quest; and he had said, “The end of the geographical is to be the beginning of the missionary undertaking.” He then was to plead for missions for the interior. And then, before he had finished the geographical task, he died in that hut, alone, in Chitambo’s kraal, in what is now north-east Rhodesia. He died not knowing that he had accomplished any great thing. The question, “What can one man do?” seemed to all human appearance well put. But how wondrously God wrought! He used Livingstone’s life and death to open the Dark Continent. The missionary’s African companions in travel loved him. They rudely embalmed his body, that they might carry it to his own people. They buried his heart under a tall tree, feeling that Africa should hold that; and after nine months they laid the body at the feet of the British consul in Zanzibar. England sent out a warship to bring the missionary home, and among the kings and queens and the great of earth buried in Westminster Abbey, the missionary’s body was laid away under the slab that reads:

“DAVID LIVINGSTONE”

MISSIONARY, TRAVELLER, PHILANTHROPIST”

The manner of his life and of his death, the fact that his heart was buried there in the heart of Africa, stirred Christendom. Society after society was organized to enter, commercial undertakings were organized to open avenues of trade. And so Providence answered the question that Livingstone could not answer, “What can one man do?”

ENDURING EXPECTANCY

The great ingathering in Burma came among the hill tribes: Wonderfully Providence had prepared these peoples for the coming of the missionaries. Judson-pioneer missionary from America-was toiling in Burma not much more than a century ago, with-but little to show, save as he was putting the Bible into Burmese. Then one day a Karen servant from the hill people recognized in the Holy Scriptures, the “Book” that his people had been singing about for generations! Away-back in their ancestral home in Western China or Central Asia, it may be, some early missionary undertaking had evidently reached their fathers, and taught them of God and of the death of the Son of God and of His promise to come again. They must have had some portion of the Word of God, and then had lost it. All the centuries of their migrations and settlement in the hills of Burma, the village bards had kept alive the tradition of the lost Book of God Judson’s Karen servant hastened to let his people know that the white man had come with the lost Book.

Thus began the spreading of the light over the Karen hills. And still the preaching of the gospel message is saving men and demonstrating the miracle-working power of the Word of God in all the earth.

The Bible or portions of it are now being printed in more than one thousand different languages.

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10. The Special Gospel Message of Preparation

THE closing work of the gospel, before Christ's second coming, is a call of preparation to meet the judgment. The gospel movement carrying this special message is described in the fourteenth of Revelation.

A GOSPEL MESSAGE SENT FROM CHRIST

The Revelation, be it recalled, is also a message from Christ outlining events of the end. On the Mount of Olives He spoke the prophetic outline of events from the fall of Jerusalem to His second advent. There He spoke in the language of historical narrative. In the Revelation He speaks in the language of symbols as well as of ordinary narrative. It is all the words of Christ. The Revelation opens with the words:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass."

One line of prophecy after another carries the outline of events from apostolic days to the end. In the fourteenth chapter, the prophet John was given a view of the end—the coming of Christ in glory, to reap the harvest. Verse 14.

But just before the second coming, the prophet was shown the rise of a -gospel movement, bearing a message of preparation to meet the Savior. Under the symbol of angels flying in the midst of heaven is pictured the flight of this closing gospel message to man. The prophet John, on Patmos, was shown an angel flying through the heavens, "having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14: 6.

Not to angels, but to men, has Christ committed the preaching of the gospel: So, long ago, students of prophecy foresaw here a special work to be done by men as the time came John Wesley cried out: "Happy are they who make the right use of these divine messages."

The burden of this closing gospel movement is preparation for the judgment. The angel was heard "saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14: 7.

It is a call to worship God as Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth. It is a message for these times when human teaching of the schools sets aside the Biblical creation. Christ is the Creator. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1: 3.

Now He is coming in power and glory. It surely is a message for the hour that calls on men to worship Him as Creator, the One who made us and who must create a new life within us if we are to stand before Him at His coming.

THE JUDGMENT IN SESSION IN HEAVEN ABOVE

The gospel message also cries to men today: "Fear, God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come." Revelation 14: 7. The Apostle Paul, in his day, preached of an hour of judgment "to come." But now the message is, "The hour of His judgment is come." It is passing in heaven above. Before Christ appears, a judgment review in heaven will have decided every case for life or death. This judgment begins with the records of the dead. It is "the time of the dead, that they should be judged." Revelation 11:18. At last it must pass to the living. When the last record is scanned, then Christ's voice in the heavenly temple cries: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his works shall be." Revelation 22: 11, 12.

One plainly sees from this that there is a judgment in heaven before Christ comes, deciding who are righteous and who unrighteous. The prophet Daniel was shown the opening of this judgment hour in heaven, while the nations were doing the last things on earth: "The Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9, 10.

In those books is the record of every life. This is not the final executive judgment on the wicked, described in Revelation 20, by which all the wicked and Satan and his evil angels are destroyed. This is the review of records preparatory to the second coming of Christ, when the righteous dead are raised from their graves to immortality, and the righteous living are caught up with them, to meet the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18. At that time, also, the living unrighteous are consumed by the glory of His appearing. 2 Thessalonians 1: 6-9.

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"The books were opened." "The judgment was set!"

This is the scene in heaven as the last days come on earth. No wonder the closing gospel message cries to every -people and tongue: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come"! Revelation 14: 7.

THE MOVEMENT CAME

As these latter days came, the movement of the prophecy came. It is a missionary movement rapidly spreading to every nation, preaching this very message, "The hour of His judgment is come." The people of the movement are called Seventh-day Adventists. Their first church building still stands in Washington, New Hampshire. They rose in 1844. But today their work is known on every continent and in the islands of the sea.

The prophet describes the rise of the movement in the last days, preaching, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come."

Here the movement is, as foretold. The movement lifts up the standard of God's law, the Ten Commandments, as the rule of life, to be kept only by faith in Christ, who alone is able to work out the righteousness of the holy law in the believing heart. The prophecy foretold this feature, when it described the people of the movement: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14: 12.

That must mean that they keep also the fourth commandment, which declares, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Thus it is that this people are called Seventh-day Adventists-observers of the seventh day and preachers of the near approach of the advent of Christ.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

The special message for the judgment hour is declared in this prophecy of Revelation 14 to be "the everlasting, gospel." And the gospel is always "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Romans 1: 16.

With what power does the judgment-hour message work in the lives of men! A few years ago, to cite but one example, a missionary launch landed on a South Sea island and left some island teachers from another-group. The island where the teachers were left was in desperate savagery, far on the road to utter physical degeneracy. A few years later a British government officer visited the island. He exclaimed later: "I am astonished at what I have seen. I cannot realize that such a change is possible. The people have taken hold of your religion with a fervid zeal that cannot be described. I have never seen, read, or heard of such a movement before. What is it that you have done to the people? They are changed.

They seem to be living now for something which I cannot understand. I marvel, and I say, It is a miracle!"

That is what it is-a miracle of the grace of Christ. The hope of Christ's soon coming changes men. "Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3: 3. So ever onward, from land to land, the movement goes-as symbolized by the angel of the prophet's vision, flying "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

As the time came, the movement rose; and it is bringing the fruitage foretold, a people everywhere "that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," preparing by His grace to meet Him when He comes.

11. Christ's Second Coming in Power and Glory

WHEN the gospel message has been carried as a witness to all the world, then Jesus comes. Listen to His words again and again: "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.

THE GATHERING OF THE SAVED

Let Christ's great prophecy from the Mount of Olives tell what follows the completion of the missionary task: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: "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. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matthew 24: 30, 31.

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The angels gather from the four quarters of earth not only the believers who are alive when He comes, but the saved of all time, who are awakened by the resurrection trumpet as Jesus comes. Said Paul: "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15: 51, 52.

This day of Christ's appearing is the joyful day toward which the children of God have been looking through all the ages.

HE COMES IN GLORY

We are to mark this: Christ's second coming is to be, visible to all. There is to be no secret or mystical coming. There will be no secret "rapture," or snatching away of the saints, as we sometimes hear it said. The prophet John, in the Revelation, says: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." Revelation 1: 7.

Some think He comes at death. But Christ takes particular care to warn us against all such views, and against false christs. All manner of false claims will be devised. Satan himself will transform himself into an "angel of light" at the very last, and seek to persuade the world that he is the one who was to come. Christ forewarns us: "Then 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 cometh 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.

Such a scene as mortal eye has never looked upon will attend His return in glory. The heavens will open. The sky will be rolled back as a scroll. Mountains and islands will be moved out of their places. The powers of heaven will be shaken. And with all the holy angels escorting Him, Christ comes to take His kingdom.

True, before He comes, His mediation work closes in the heavenly sanctuary. The word is spoken, "He that is holy, let him be holy still."

Every soul is saved or lost, and human probation is closed eternally. No one will know when probation will close. This is where the great day of the Lord comes "as a thief in the night." But when the Lord appears, it is with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet of God, and amidst glory beyond all words to tell or human mind to conceive.

TO TAKE HIS PEOPLE HOME

The coming of Christ is the time of giving the rewards to His children of all ages past. The Apostle Paul knew that he was to be slain. Nero's sentence was already given. Death was near. But the apostle looked to the day of Christ's second coming as the time when he would live again. He wrote from the death cell in the Roman prison: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." 2 Timothy 4: 6-8.

The redeemed of all the ages are waiting for "that day." What a glorious day! The saved of all generations will ascend with Christ together to the heavenly city which He has gone to prepare. He said when He went away: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14: 2, 3. We must watch and be ready when the Savior comes to take His children to the heavenly city.

"EVEN AT THE DOORS"

The signs which were to show the coming of Christ near at hand, have appeared-signs in the heavens, and in the earth, and among the nations, as foretold by Christ. The great movement of modern missions arose as the time of the end came, and in these last days the special gospel movement has come that was to bear the closing message of the judgment hour to the world. Revelation 14: 6-14. These things have come.

Of the coming of the signs of the end, 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.

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But of the time when these signs shall 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 fulfilled in the past or in process of fulfillment in our time. We know, then, 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."

"THIS SAME JESUS"

The Savior who is soon coming in power and glory is the One who loves us and died to save us. How persistently the Scripture stresses this thought that the One who is coming in power and glory is none other than the Savior and Redeemer whose presence and loving care have all along been over His children!

The patriarch Job, in the early morning of world history, rejoiced in this thought: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger." Job 19: 25-27, margin.

It is He Himself, and not a stranger-the same who had been with the patriarch all the way. He is coming at last to gather His own. The apostle repeats it: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

"The Lord Himself." He is the One who is coming. It is He Himself. No angel could lead man back to the lost Paradise and the tree of life. Only the Son of God could do it.

No angel could pay the price of our redemption from sin. Only Jesus Himself could do it. And as He comes He leaves to no other the leadership of the angelic hosts who are to gather the redeemed of all the ages. "The Lord Himself shall descend."

When He went away, at His ascension, leaving the disciples gazing after the form of the Savior they so well knew and loved, the angels that appeared beside them in white, left for them and for us the promise: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1: 11.

He is coming again, visibly, bodily, the "same Jesus" who ascended. And the spread of the gospel into all the world is the great sign that His coming is close at hand. As we have found Him a Savior from sin, a Comforter and Helper who is closer than a brother, so as we think of that great and truly awful day of His coming, may we recall ever with joy the blessed truth that this King of kings and Lord of lords, who is coming in indescribable glory and power, is the "same Jesus" who loved us and died to save us.

When He appeared to the eleven, after His resurrection, He showed them the pierced hands and feet, saying, "It is I Myself." Even so, as He comes in glory, most glorious of all will be the light shining from the pierced hands and side, the marks of His dying love for us, as the prophet Habakkuk saw it in vision: "His brightness was as the light; He had bright beams out of His side: and there was the hiding of His power." Habakkuk 3: 4, margin. Or, in Adam Smith's translation, "bright rays from each hand of Him."

The marks of the crucifixion are the badges of glory and power. "I shall know Him, I shall know Him By the print of the nails in His hands."

"BE READY"

With the parable of the ten virgins, Christ closed the prophetic outline on the Mount of Olives. That is the lesson for us. All were waiting for the bridegroom. All expected to go in to the marriage feast. They had to wait longer than they had expected. Then, suddenly, the cry came, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go you out to meet him!" Matthew 25: 6.

All rose, expectant. But some were not ready. The oil had burned out from their lamps. That is, some of those who had been waiting had lost out in Christian experience while they waited. The oil of His love and grace had burned out. They were not ready-when, suddenly, the Bridegroom came.

"They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage." And those who were almost ready, who had still to go and get ready, were left out. "The door was shut."

Those who were found ready had kept ready all the time. Every day they kept right with God. Every night they retired to rest knowing that they had confessed every known sin. And as surely as we

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come to Christ with every sin, repentant, abiding in Him, so surely is the blood of Jesus cleansing away all sin. He makes the sinner whole. He makes us ready and keeps us ready, by His grace, to meet Him with joy as He comes.

“Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that great day;
Oh, wash me in Thy precious blood,
And take my sins away!”