

## **Towards The Dawn Of Better Times**

covets. However, in searching the time map of Scripture, this skepticism over the passing of one age and the coming of a better, is one of the things that helps to locate the world's most stirring age.

That age is spoken of in the Old Book as "the last times," "the last days," "the latter times," etc. It is true the Christian dispensation is referred to occasionally as "the last time," because, in God's purpose, the last phase of His dealings with the salvation of men began with the life of Christ on earth. Yet there are many specific references to the last days of human history-the time immediately prior to the founding of a new order under the kingship of Christ.

"There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." 2 Peter 3: 3. The scoffer may not today be blatant, but he is none the less effective-in the pulpit, in the professor's chair, in the home, in the street, in our literature. The tragedy of rejecting God's solution of present troubles is deplorable, but it is present with us. "Where is this promised advent? Since the day our fathers fell asleep, things remain exactly as they were from the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3: 4, Moffatt's translation. Men fail to see that God fixes the future fulfillment of His promises, not to prolong suffering, but because "He does not wish any to perish, but all to betake them to repentance." Verse 10.

### **THE PRICE WE PAY**

Again: "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers," etc. 2 Timothy 3:1,2. Are not these days of peril -physical, mental, spiritual?

At what tremendous physical cost, apart from the spiritual cost already discussed, we have built up this age of ours! On British roads alone a quarter of a million people are injured and almost eight thousand are killed every year. Those figures could perhaps be multiplied tenfold for the principal countries of the world. In New York City thirteen hundred people are slain by vehicular traffic every year. And surely there was never an age when accidents on land, on the sea, and in the air were so common -to say nothing of calamities by tempest, earthquake, and other upheavals of nature. The picture is a very complete one when we add to this list the other signs by which Jesus said the passing of the old order might be recognized: wars, actual and threatened, national uprisings. Famines, pestilences, earthquakes, abounding iniquity, distressful nations, men's hearts full of fear, unusual signs in the sidereal heavens. Compare Matthew 24:1-12 and Luke 21:7-11, 25-36.

### **SPIRITUAL APOSTASY**

"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." 1 Timothy 4:1. That there has been a startling declension from the faith as taught by Jesus and His disciples can scarcely be questioned in the light of post-war apostasy. May not the growth of multitudes of absurdly false and grotesque religious ideas in these days be the result of this departure from the faith? People who reject established truth accept deceptive lies, thus: "Because they received not the love of the truth God shall send [or permit] them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:10,11. The best safeguard against deception is the truth, and truth on matters spiritual is to be found in the Book which claims to be the revelation of God's will.

### **AN IDENTIFICATION PARADE**

The struggles between the great class groups of society, which have already caused great concern in the world, and which are yet destined further to disrupt the peace of nations, are, curiously enough, the subject of a comment in one of these "last day" New Testament references. The accumulation of riches by a few on the one hand, and the endurance of poverty by the masses on the other is bound to lead to just such results as are foreshadowed in this way: "Go to now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. You have heaped treasure together for the last days." James 5:1-6. About two hundred men, a short time ago, owned one-quarter of the wealth of the United States. As in America, so in Britain and Europe, one-tenth of the people possess about nine-tenths of the wealth. The effect of riches on one-tenth of the people is the same, curiously enough, as poverty on nine-tenths of the people-barrenness of spirit. "Paradoxically, extreme wealth and extreme poverty both produce much the same spiritual evils," says Hugh Martin, in "Christ and Money," page 22. "They both lead to starvation of the soul." When the souls of men are starving, then class struggles, revolutions, wars, moral and spiritual degeneracy, etc., are bound to follow.

Did not the old Book foretell our times with accuracy? If we could parade the ages before us

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could there be any mistake in identifying this present one as the last and most stirring of all?

### **THE SILVER SIDE OF THE CLOUD**

What a good thing the Scriptural picture of “the last days” is not all gloomy! Associated with the end of time is a great revival of true spiritual religion which shall out-Pentecost Pentecost for splendor and power.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, said God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit.” Acts 2: 17-20. When God pours His Spirit upon men in a faithless generation mighty deeds always follow. In this case God attests this new reformation by mighty signs from heaven: “And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath.” That this reappearance of Pentecostal power, that this return to a demonstration of -the miraculous is part of God’s great plan to seek to save men by a supreme final appeal is provable in several ways.

Firstly, it is to transpire “before that great and notable day of the Lord come.” Acts 2: 20. See also Joel. 2:31. As a further chronological link, some of these same physical wonders are mentioned in the Book of Revelation, followed immediately by the appearance of Christ, who intervenes to save the world from itself. Revelation 6: 12, 13.

### **THE NEW PATHWAY TO PENTECOST**

Secondly, multitudes of men are to turn from the empty dissatisfactions of this world to call upon the living God: “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 2: 21. See also Joel 2: 32. Peter, it is true, applied this statement to what he saw in his day at Pentecost, but that was the notable beginning of the gospel dispensation, and this the dynamic ending. One was the “former rain” and the other “the latter rain.” Joel 2: 23. The first rain prepared the way for a grand beginning; the latter rain of God’s Spirit will ripen the earth for the final harvest of sincere souls which, Jesus said, is at “the end of the world.” Matthew 13: 37-39.

Perhaps the most wonderful picture of the world’s harvest is that in which the Great Harvester is seen coming to reap the harvest of the earth. Revelation 14: 14, 15. Immediately preceding that scene are statements indicating. (1) A world-wide proclamation of the old gospel which saves men’s souls; (2) a frank and universal warning, through this reformation preaching, that the end of the age is at hand. (3) Distinguishing signs by which men anxious to serve the living God may be recognized in a disobedient age, and (4) a short, tense, final struggle between the forces of righteousness and the hosts of iniquity.

### **THE WHOLE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD**

“This gospel of the kingdom,” it was called by Jesus. Obviously, this refers to news of the coming kingdom, the new world order and its ruler. It is to “be preached in all the world for a witness, unto all nations.” Matthew 24: 14.

If we could list in full, the philanthropic, humanitarian, and evangelistic organizations that have arisen in the past century or so, we should have the strongest evidence of the suddenness and of the extent of these movements. Here is a partial list:-

- 1799 Religious Tract Society, London, organized.
- 1804 British and Foreign Bible Society organized.
- 1806 Dublin Bible Society began.
- 1808 First American Bible Society (Philadelphia).
- 1808 London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.
- 1809 Edinburgh Bible Society formed.
- 1813 Wesleyan Missionary Society formed.
- 1816 American Bible Society started.
- 1817 Baptist Missionary Society started.
- 1821 Gospel of Matthew first embossed for the blind by Sir Charles Lowther.
- 1824 Formation of Royal National Lifeboat Institution.
- 1825 National Bible Society of Scotland formed.
- 1825 Church of Scotland Mission Board instituted.
- 1831 Trinitarian Bible Society started.

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- 1834 Braille type invented for the blind.
- 1836 First Training Institution for lady nurses opened.
- 1838 Abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire.
- 1840 Wesleyan Calvinistic Methodist Missionary Society formed.
- 1840 Elizabeth Fry's Nurses' Training Institution in England.
- 1840 First complete Bible for the blind.
- 1841 Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society formed.
- 1843 Primitive Methodist Mission started.
- 1847 Moon's type for blind invented.
- 1847 Presbyterian Church of England Missions began.
- 1848 First Government Lifeboat Station in U.S.A.
- 1862 China Inland Mission formed.
- 1865 Friends' Foreign Missions Association started.
- 1880 Church of England Zenana Missionary Society formed.
- 1880 Central African Mission of English Universities started.

Within a few years the two largest Bible societies, the British and Foreign, and the American, were annually distributing not less than ten million copies of the whole or part of the Scriptures. Just as the Reformation of the sixteenth century could never have done its work without the Bible in the hands of the people, so in these last times the greater reformation must come through the message of the Old Book.

No generation of men has fully understood the whole of the Bible. Truth is not static. It grows as God's Spirit reveals more and more to successive generations of truth-seekers. Consequently the last generation of God's saints on earth should possess a fuller measure of Biblical truth than any other.

### **NEW LIGHT FROM HEAVEN**

We must be ready to accept new truth if God sends it to us, just as the people in the times of Luther and Calvin had to make decisions to accept new light or lose their souls in error.

In later years the descendants of the Reformers stopped in their tracks and made but little or no progress toward the new light God- was sending them. The Pilgrim Fathers bemoaned this fact in the seventeenth century as they sailed from Leyden, for in his farewell sermon, Pastor Robinson "took occasion miserably to bewail the state and condition of the Reformed churches, who were come to a period in religion, and would go no farther than the instruments of their Reformation."

He then compares the Lutherans and Calvinists with their respective leaders: "They stick where he left them: a misery much to be lamented."

Of Luther and Calvin he said: "And were they now living. They would be as ready and willing to embrace further light, as that they had received."-Ed. Winslow's account of Robinson's last sermon, in "Hypocrisy Unmasked," page 97.

The institutional religion of our time has, despite some noble exceptions, become so formal and conservative that its spiritual power is departed. The instruments of the new reformation could scarcely be any of the great world religions as we now know them. What the world now needs is a revitalizing spiritual revival in such heaven-sent power that it shall sweep through the earth-like

### **A NEW MESSAGE TO MAN.**

In the early part of the nineteenth century men in various countries arose and, on the strength of their studies of prophetic Scripture, began proclaiming the doctrine of the second advent of Jesus Christ with power. In old England we had our original and distinguished Edward Irving preaching powerfully the reformatory Scriptural doctrine of the pre-millennial second advent, as well as other stalwarts such as Henry Drummond, and Way. In Germany there arose men like Wolff and Kelber, in America Krupp, McGregor, Davis, and Miller. These men, and others like them quite unknown to each other, began the proclamation of the imminent return of Jesus and associated doctrines, with stirring results. Today there has arisen from this a world-encircling movement which promulgates in practically every known tongue the new message of the Old Book which is destined to go to "all the world for a witness to all nations," before "the end" shall come.

Could a loving God do less than warn a judgment-bound world of the imminence of such a catastrophic event as the second advent? "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret

unto His servants the prophets.” Amos 3: 7.

## **The Most Glorious Pageant in History**

MR. HUGH MARTIN, of the Student Christian Movement, has very vigorously defended the doctrine of the second advent of Jesus Christ as a final solution of world problems. He has, despite interpretative differences, a growing support for the main fact in all sections of the thinking public. He says:-

“The doctrine of the second coming is no mere outworn trapping of Jewish thought, to be discarded in our enlightened times, no unpractical and unworthy matter of speculation. It is of the essence of our faith. It expresses the Christian assurance of victory. It proclaims the ultimate triumph of good which is the justification of our trust in God.” *The Necessity of the Second Coming*,” Page 54.

The facts are that, by tacit admission as well as by public expression, great numbers of people are, in face of the fearful confusion among men, looking more and more to the coming of the Christ as the only permanent solution of the world’s ills.

If Mr. Martin belongs to a somewhat modern school of Christian thought, the well-known S. D. Gordon represents the deeply spiritual, and perhaps more fundamentalist, section of Christendom. He very beautifully and characteristically put his case for the pre-millennial advent in this way toward the close of the Great War:

“The Book says repeatedly that the return of Christ will be preceded by a crisis. The characteristics of the whole run of time from Christ’s utterance up to this terrific climax are clearly stated. Wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, false religious teachers, defects in the church-these have been common to every generation. This war has witnessed the fiercest intensifying of some of these characteristics since Christ talked of them on Olivet. The very stupendous nature of it naturally suggests working up to a climax like a stiffened index finger pointing straight toward such a crisis as the Book says goes before the return of Christ and the consequent change in the order of things. And I want to say very thoughtfully, this, a venturesome thing to risk one’s judgment upon, this: it is a working possibility that this will occur in our generation. I might say a working probability. I do say that to myself.” – “*Quiet Talks on the Meaning of the War*,” pages 62, 66-69.

### **THE PRICE OF PREPAREDNESS**

It is evident to the devout that Jesus desired to direct the minds of His troubled people, not so much to the distresses and disabilities of the times, as to the consumingly glorious hope He set before them in His emphatic advent utterances.

“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. I will come again.” John 14:1-3. This comfort to the faithful is in contrast to His statement in the twenty-first chapter of Luke, that the worldlings’ hearts will, in the last times, be “failing them for fear.” Calm, untroubled, restful souls in the tempest of life-what a beautiful picture of those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus! That is the assured result of heeding the Savior’s solemn warnings to His people: “Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21:36. “Take you heed, watch and pray: for you know not when the time is.” Mark 13:33.

Another strong declaration, and one which has caused almost as much difficulty to the critics of the apocalyptic advent teaching as it caused consternation to Caiaphas, fell from the Savior’s lips in the presence of the rulers of the Jews. “Tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God,” cried Caiaphas. “Jesus said unto him, Thou has said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Matthew 26:63,64. He claimed to be the Christ, and He unequivocally proclaimed what we believe to be the only rational teaching of Scripture-the supernatural and visible advent in power and glory.

### **THE UNIVERSAL SAVIOUR**

It is destructive of the whole plan of human redemption and cosmic renovation to make these and

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hundreds of other Biblical mentions of the second advent apply exclusively to the siege and fall of Jerusalem, or to the transfiguration, or to the destruction of successive civilizations, etc., as so many have tried to do. Those things, surely, were but smaller judgments and deliverance in anticipation of the greater deliverance at the last day. How can we harmonize such localized events as the destruction of Jerusalem with the universal nature of the great advent declarations of the Bible? For example, the coming of the Messiah will be:

1. Universally visible. Matthew 24: 27, 30; Revelation 1: 7.
2. Universally audible. 1 Thessalonians 4: 16.
3. Universally glorious. Titus 2: 13; Matthew 16: 27; Revelation 19:11-16.
4. Universally redemptive:
  - (a) Of men (Hebrews 9: 28; Revelation 5:9-14); and
  - (b) Of the physical world. Romans 8: 22; Isaiah 65: 17.
5. Universal Judgement: (a) To the just, and (b) to the unjust. Revelation 6: 15-17; 22: 12; Romans 2: 4-9.
6. Universally satisfactory and lasting in its results. Revelation 22: 3, 4; Isaiah 45: 23; 65: 17-24.

Just as the joy of salvation, through the grace of Jesus now operating in our hearts, is open to all men who will receive it, so the hope of final physical and spiritual regeneration through the personal appearance of Jesus belongs to all loyal souls, whatever their race or station. Jesus is the Savior of the world, and His advent is the coming of the world's Redeemer and Renovator as the final fulfillment of all just men's aspirations.

### **THE SUPERLATIVE PAGEANTRY OF His APPEARING**

What language could describe the splendor of an event which even in the apocalyptic utterances of Scripture leaves more to imagination than to description? Certainly pen cannot adequately portray the picture.

Glory and power surround the event. "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Luke 21:27. "He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26.

Can it be that, just as cohorts of shining angels received Him into heaven at His ascension (Acts 1: 9), so the whole angelic host escorts Him back in glory finally to receive His kingdom for ever? And may it not be that, due to this emptying of heaven to witness the last and most stupendous pageant in the history of man, there is to be "silence in heaven," as recorded under the opening of the seventh seal? Revelation 8:1. Thus it would be that all heaven and earth witnesses this last and transcendental coming of the King of kings. "And every eye shall see Him." Revelation 1:7.

Just as heaven and earth sees the magnificent sight, so all men and angels hear the triumphal cry of redeemed hosts and adoring angels; for "with a shout" that shall rend the heavens, and "with the voice of the Archangel that shall resurrect the dead, comes this welcome cavalcade from the skies. 1 Corinthians 15: 15, 16, 51, 52; Revelation 6: 14.

### **A RENOVATED WORLD**

God's program of restoration is complete in every detail. It includes the creation as well as the creature, the world as well as its inhabitants. There is no evidence that the tragedy of sin as we know it in this world has ever affected any other world.

The presence of sin, though that word is much out of favor in our arrogantly modern age, is as evident in the physical world as in the animal creation.

To speak of the material order first. Paul, who more than fifty times refers to the coming of Christ, speaks in this way on the effect of sin's presence in the whole of creation: "To this day, we know, the entire creation sighs and throbs with pain the hope being that creation as well as man would one day be freed from its thralldom to decay and gain the glorious, freedom of the children of God." Romans 8:21,22, Moffatt's translation. So that this wonderful nature we love so well, and which, despite the ravages of decay, is still beautiful and soothing to man, is to be restored to Edenic perfection.

The first step in that process seems to be the complete elimination of every vestige of the ravages of deterioration. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3: 7.

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### NEVER AGAIN!

This evidently means that just as the baptism by water obliterated the iniquities of the antediluvian world (2 Peter 3: 7), this time there is to be a final purification by fire, so that all traces of sin shall be removed. Luke 17: 28-30.

While this thought is scorned by many people, we ought to remember that, after all, evolutionary science offers us no explanation of the distant future condition of the world beyond (1) extinction by extreme heat, or (2) extermination by extreme cold. The ultimate things of evolution are, to say the least, comfortless. On the other hand, Christian progress is toward perfection. We much prefer the Christian assurance of eternal life in a renovated and meaningful world.

There is a reference later in Scripture to the last cleansing by fire, which indicates that the finally and incorrigibly impenitent among men are also removed from the earth. Revelation 20: 9. Not even the Creator can compel goodness in men who do not choose it voluntarily.

Though sin is largely inexplicable to us, we may rest assured that a wise and loving God has done all things well, and in eternity the redeemed will understand what now is seen as "through a glass darkly." Never again shall sin with its sorry trail of misery raise its baneful head.

The refining fires "that shall burn as an oven" (Malachi 4: 1) having done their work, it would appear that the physical world is as it was "in the beginning" – "without form, and void," the Lord having caught up His saints in safety during this reconstruction period. 1 Thessalonians 4: 17. Jeremiah saw the earth evidently at this period: 'I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord.'" Jeremiah 4: 23-26.

The apostles seemed to be quite clear about the end of the old order with the coming of the day of the Lord: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

## A World of Satisfactions

GOD having purposed that the earth should be a happy home for man. "He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." Isaiah 45:18), He thereupon pronounces the most momentous words since Calvary: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." And then, in infinitely tender regard for the inhabitants of the renewed earth, He adds: "And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65: 17.

No more remembrance of sorrow! No piercing regrets and painful remorse! A new world for new men! Was not this the hope of the early church? "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3: 13.

This new earth, like the old, is created by divine fiat. It is natural that our pictorial glimpses thereof through the Bible penmen are but fragmentary. They are, however, sufficient to reveal surpassing beauty and satisfying perfection.

How pleasant that goodly land will be the present faculties of man cannot comprehend. We may gaze spellbound at the glory of an Alpine sunrise. We may be lost in soothing reveries as we watch the flaming sky bidding the sun adieu across the western ocean, we may revel in the charm of autumn tints, we may laugh and sing with the joys of spring, we may be emotionally transported by the rhapsodies of a Bach or a Beethoven, we may conjure up our best conceptions of happiness; but when all that has happened we must remember that, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." 1 Corinthians 2: 9.

What we do know of our future impressions of the new world order may perhaps best be summarized in the words of one of the greatest Biblical characters, who, in speaking of his hope of a future life in a new world, said: "As for me I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." Isaiah 17:4,5.

When we see the Son of man and all He has done to "prepare a place for us," when, too, we are "like Him" (1 John 3:2), we shall without exception be abundantly satisfied. A world of satisfied souls!