

Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy

“How, added to a conquered world, Euphrates 'bates his tide, And Huns, beyond our frontiers hurled, O'er straitened deserts ride. “The Goths beyond the sea may plot, The warlike Basques may plan. Friend, never heed them! Vex thee not. For this our mortal span of little wants.” -Book 2, Marris's Translation.

But the words were written on the ancient parchment in the days of Babylon, “The kingdom shall be divided;” and true to the word of the prophet, the Roman Empire fell apart with the mixture of nations and peoples that swept into it. The elements did not hold together, even as the mixture of iron and clay in the image did not cleave together. Broken tip by the invasions of fresh nations from the north, the Western Empire was divided into lesser kingdoms, out of which have grown the modern nations of western Europe.

Not one word in the outline of the prophecy thus far has failed of fulfillment. These modern kingdoms growing out of divided Rome have never been reunited. “They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men,” said the prophecy. Nearly all the reigning houses of Europe today are related by intermarriage; the prophecy said it would be so; but “they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” So we see it. No statesman, no master of legions, has been able to join these nations together again in one great empire. Charles V had the thought in mind, some think. Napoleon dreamed of doing it. But it was not to be. Never more was there to be one universal monarchy.

We may know that as surely as the course of world empire has followed the exact outline of the prophecy put on the inspired record in the days of Babylon of old, just so surely the specifications Of the closing portion of the outline will be fulfilled. The fourth great kingdom was to be divided. Rome was the fourth empire: it was divided. The kingdoms of the divided empire are acting their part before our eyes today.

The Next Great Event

And what next? That is the question for us. Now the prophetic outline that began with ancient Babylon touches the things of our own day. The word spoken before Nebuchadnezzar so long ago is now spoken especially to us:

“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

“Forasmuch as thou saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”

“In the days of these kings,”-these kingdoms of our Own time, the next great world-changing event is to be the coming of Christ to begin the setting up of his everlasting kingdom. That is the grand climax toward which all the course of history has been tending. At last the end is to come. Down in the feet of iron and of clay, Weak and divided, soon to pass away. What will the next great, glorious drama be? Christ and His coming, and eternity.”

As the stone, cut out of the mountain “without hands,” smote the image, so that all its parts, representative of earthly dominion, were ground to dust and blown away, so Christ's coming kingdom, set up “without hands,” by no human power, but by the power of the eternal God, will end all earthly dominion and bring the utter destruction of sin and sinners out of the earth. “The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” Then may all eyes well be turned toward the next great step foretold in the prophetic outline - the coming of Christ's glorious everlasting kingdom, which shall not pass away.

“Look for the way marks as you journey on,
Look for the way marks, passing one by one,
Down through the ages, past the kingdoms four,
Where are we standing? Look the way marks over.”

4. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

“UNTO them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

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Hebrews 9:28.

Too often the Second Coming of Christ is looked upon simply as a doctrine. It is, however, more than a doctrine merely to be believed; it is an impending event., something that is to take place on earth, and the most stupendous, all transcendent event for the world since Christ came the first time to die on Calvary for the sins of men.

This Second Coming of Christ, like His first coming, has been the theme of divine prophecy from the beginning. This was emphasized by the apostle Peter in his second recorded sermon. He pressed upon the people of Jerusalem the fact that the things “which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer” (Acts 3:18), had been fulfilled to the letter before their eyes. Not a word had failed. Just so, he said, all that the prophets had spoken of His Second Coming would be fulfilled:

“He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:20,21.

The Promise of His Coming

As iniquity began to abound, God sent a message to the antediluvian world, declaring that Christ's coming in glory would end the reign of sin:

“ Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all.” Jude 14, 15. The promise of Christ's con-ling was the “Blessed hope” in the patriarchal age. In Job's dark hour of trial his heart clung to the promise, and he was kept from despair:

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ... whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” Job 19: 25-27. The psalmist sang of it: “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.” Psalm 50:3.

And the prophets of later times were unceasingly moved upon to talk of the glory of that coming, of events preceding it, and of the preparation for it. “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence.” “Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Isaiah 62:6, 11.

The message of His coming is to be heralded to the ends of the earth; for it is, “good tidings of great joy” to every one who will receive it. On that last night with His disciples before the crucifixion, when His heart was sorrowful even unto death, as the burden of all our iniquities was about to be laid upon Him, Christ's love for His own made precious to Him the thought of His Second Coming to gather them home at last, safe from all sin and trouble; and He said:

“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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: 1-3. In that assurance the heart finds rest. O the preciousness of the promise, “I will come again”! “I am coming for you,” is the cheering message. “Yes, Lord,” we reply, “we will wait, and watch, and be ready, by Thy grace.”

The Manner of His Coming

Christ's Second Coming is to be visible to all the world. There is to be nothing secret or mystical about it. The revelator says:

“Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.” Revelation 1: 7. Christ Himself described the scene to His disciples as it will appear to the eyes of all: “As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matthew 24:27. “Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.” Mark 13:26.

The day of the Lord. The close of probation, the initial outpouring of the judgments of God -will come “as a thief in the night,” but Christ's personal appearing will be visible to all. The heavens will open,

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the earth quake, the trump of God resound, and such glory as mortal eye has never seen will burst upon the world when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords.

“He comes not an infant in Bethlehem born,
He comes not to lie in a manger.
He comes not again to be treated with scorn,
He comes not a shelterless stranger.
He comes not to Gethsemane,
To weep and sweat blood in the garden.
He comes not to die on the tree,
To purchase for rebels a pardon.
Oh, no; glory, bright glory, Environs Him now.”

“This Same Jesus”

The Lord would have His children understand that this One who comes in power and glory is the same Savior of men who once walked by blue Galilee. As the disciples were watching their Savior, and ours, ascending bodily into heaven from Olivet, until “a cloud received Him out of their sight,” suddenly two angels stood by them, who said:

“You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? 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: 9, 11.

“This same Jesus!” It was the loving Friend and Elder Brother, Son of man as well as Son of God, who was passing from their sight. He will come back the “same Jesus,” though in glory indescribable, having “all the holy angels with Him.”

The prophet Habakkuk thus described Christ's glorious appearing, as it was represented to him in vision: His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had rays coming forth from His hand; And there was the hiding of His power.” Habakkuk 3:3,4, A. R. V.

Surely it is the “same Jesus,” and the mark of the cruel nails is the shining badge of His power to save. “I shall know Him by the print of the nails in His hands.” As the redeemed see Him who was crucified for them coming in glory, they will cry, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Isaiah 25: 9.

But that day will be a day of darkness as well as of light. The unready, the unrepentant, will realize too late that in rejecting Christ's pardon and love and sacrifice, they have rejected the only means by which they might have been prepared to meet the coming King, before whose face no sin can endure. “Every eye shall see Him,” the apostle says, and he describes the terror of that day to the unprepared:

“The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” Revelation 6:15-17.

The scenes of that great day are so beyond human comprehension that it is difficult to realize that such a time is actually before us. “Then, O my Lord, prepare my soul for that great day.”

The Purpose of His Coming

The Scriptures make very clear the purpose of Christ's Second Coming and the events of that great day. It has been the hope of the children of God through all the ages. The apostle Paul calls it the “blessed hope.” “The grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Titus 2:11-13.

The saints of God have fallen asleep in death with their faith reaching forward to Christ's glorious

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appearing. So the veteran apostle fell, with eyes upon "that day." "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.

Christ's Second Coming is the grand climax of the plan of salvation. Not till then are the children of God ushered into the eternal kingdom. Then the crowns of life are bestowed, and the saved all go together through the gates into the city - patriarch and prophet, apostle and reformer, and the child of God of this last generation. Of the ancient worthies it is written:

"These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11: 39, 40. What a glorious day it will be when the ransomed of all the ages, march in together through the gates into the city! It is to take His children to their eternal home that Christ comes the second time. This was His promise to the disciples:

"I go to Prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare it place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that *here I am, there you may be also." John 14: 2, 3. Not in detail, but in their general order, let us follow the events of that great day as the revelator saw it and heard it in, a vision of the last day:

The Prelude to His Coming

"There came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, . . . and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance, before God." Revelation 16:17-19. "The heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Revelation 6: 14.

His Glorious Appearing

Then bursts upon the world the glory of our Savior's coming: "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. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet." Matthew 24:30, 31.

"I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." Revelation 14:14, 15.

The Resurrection and Translation of the Just

The time to reap has come, and the wheat is gathered at last into the garner of the Lord: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:51,52. "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: 31.

"This we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For 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: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-18.

The righteous dead are raised to life as the trump of God sounds and the voice of the Archangel calls to His sleeping saints, and the living righteous are transformed from mortality to immortality. Then all together, with the escort of the angels, they follow the Savior to the heavenly mansions that He has

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prepared in the city of God.

The Destruction of the Wicked

Before the glorious majesty of the coming King no sin can endure; for true it is that “our God is a consuming fire” now, in the day of His mercy, consuming sin out of the heart that by faith approaches the throne of grace, but in that day consuming the unrepentant sinner with his sin.

Where will the sinner hide in that day, in that day? Where will the sinner hide in that day? It will be in vain to call, 'You mountains on us fall!' For His hand will find out all in that day. It is the great day long foretold by seer and prophet. Again let us read the description of what it will mean to the unsaved to see Christ coming in glory; for the terror of that day must warn us now to keep within the refuge of the Savior's loving grace:

“The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” Revelation 6:15-17.

The same glory that transforms the righteous is a consuming fire to those who have rejected Christ's salvation:

“Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.” 2 Thessalonians 2: 8. “When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9.

The Climax of Human History

Thus the second coining of Christ brings the resurrection and translation of the righteous, the death of the wicked, and the end of the world. The resurrection of the wicked does not then take place, but only that of the just; save for some of the wicked dead who had a special part in warring against Christ, “they also which pierced Him” (Revelation 1:7). These are raised to see His coming, necessarily to, fall again before the consuming glory of His presence. The righteous are taken to reign with Christ in the heavenly city for a thousand years, and during the same period the earth lies in desolation and chaos, uninhabited by man, a dark abyss, the dreary prison house of Satan. Of the two resurrections, first of the just and then of the unjust, we are told:

“They [the righteous] lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” Revelation 20:4-6. It is at the end of the thousand years that the resurrection of the wicked takes place. Then the city of God descends, “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,” and the wicked come forth to condemnation and the second death, from which there is no waking.

“Now is the Accepted Time”

Now is the day of salvation, when by Christ's grace we may prepare for that great day. To be found among His redeemed ones in that day will be of infinitely greater worth than anything this world can give, of pleasure, or possessions, or honor. Nothing will count then but the blessed hope.

Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, found the personal Savior in the days of the Methodist revival in England. All her wealth and all her social influence were devoted to Christ, even though titled friends took umbrage at her close association with the poor and the humble who gave heed to the message of the hour, and pressed into the kingdom. She wrote of her joy in being numbered with the children of God:

“I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious throne to bow,

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

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

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

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

5. SIGNS OF THE APPROACHING END

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

“What Shall be the Sign?”

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

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

A Striking Parallel

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

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