

35. Signs That His Coming Is Near

AFTER Jesus had assured His disciples that He would come again, they came to Him with the earnest in enquiry: "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matt. 24:3. Jesus' answer to this question was positive and clear. As recorded by Luke, He declared, "There shall be signs." (Luke 21:25.) This was an encouraging assurance. Christ's people would not be left in darkness concerning this crowning event in the work of redemption.

Comes Not in Secret

Since the visits of the Son of God to this earth are of vital importance to those who live here, they are not carried out in secret. Long before His coming, He makes strong announcements of His intentions and warns men everywhere to prepare for the momentous event.

Prior to Christ's first coming, He revealed through His prophets the very year in which He would be baptized and anointed and the exact time of His crucifixion. Had His people believed the Scriptures, they would have been expecting Him and would have made preparation of heart to meet Him. When John appeared in the wilderness of Judea, he announced with great earnestness and power, "The time is fulfilled." He realized that the hour had struck for Christ to appear, and he warned men everywhere to seek a preparation of heart to receive Him.

Most of the people were engrossed in slothfulness and sin. Their hearts were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and with the cares of this life. They were filled with pride and self righteousness, and felt no need of a Savior who could deliver them from sin's bondage. They were not watching and waiting for His appearing; therefore, they were not prepared to receive Him when He came.

Just so it will be with the masses of humanity when He comes the second time. It will overtake them "as a snare" or as a thief in the night," and they will be taken "unawares." It will come upon them as an overwhelming surprise.

But it is not necessary that the people of earth be surprised by His coming, for "there shall be signs"; and these signs, if heeded, will clearly indicate the time of His appearing.

Yes, "there shall be signs." Signs where? There will be signs everywhere in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth. (Luke 21: 25.) Wherever one looks-in earth, sea, or sky-the signs of His coming will be on display.

These were Jesus' words. It was His divine prediction; and it is, therefore, with confidence that we may look 'for these promised omens that will reveal the time when His coming is due. The exact day and hour is not revealed, but so nearly so that His people may know when He is near, yes, even at the door. See Matt. 24:33.

Jesus personally revealed some of the signs of His coming, but not all of them. Others had long since been foretold by the ancient prophets. The Bible, from beginning to end, is filled with prophetic utterances foretelling conditions that will prevail on the earth in the last days. These conditions will constitute signs of His coming. Some of the prophets were led by the Spirit of God to foretell the entire history of the world, including the rise and fall of nations from the time of the prophecy to the end. The burden of every such prophecy was to warn men of that day of days and urge them to prepare to stand before Him.

Daniel's Prophecy

Thus it was with Daniel's prophecy which was based upon the great metallic image shown to King Nebuchadnezzar in vision. When called to stand before the king to explain the meaning of the vision, Daniel declared:

"Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. And the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Dan. 2:31-35.

This was the dream. In interpreting its meaning, Daniel stated that the head of gold represented the empire of Babylon, over which Nebuchadnezzar ruled. "Thou art this head of gold." Verse 38.

"And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron." Verses 39, 40.

The second kingdom, represented by the breast and arms of silver, was Medo-Persia, which conquered Babylon in 538 BC.

The third kingdom "of brass" was Grecia, which overcame Medo-Persia in 331 BC. And the fourth kingdom, represented by the legs of iron, was the "iron monarchy of Rome," which overthrew Grecia in 168 BC.

Then came the disintegration of the fourth great universal monarchy, as was represented by the ten toes of the image, which were a mixture of iron and clay.

"And whereas thou saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." Verses 41-43.

What a fit illustration is this of the breaking up of the great Roman empire into many fragments! Through internal disintegration, Rome in her later years lost her moral and political power and became a prey to the hordes of barbarians that began to pour across her borders about AD. 351. This started the falling apart, the separation of the weak from the strong; and in a short time ten separate and independent kingdoms were established on her ruins.

The ten kingdoms of western Europe, into which Rome was divided, find their posterity in some of the modern nations of today. The Alemanni were the sires of the Germanic race; the Franks were the forbears of the French; and the Anglo-Saxons are now known as the English, etc.

The prophecy indicates that efforts would be made again to cement these nations into another world empire, but that all such plans would fall. "They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men." Verse 43. This would indicate intermarriage among the rulers of the nations, which is exactly what has been done through the centuries since Rome's decline and fall. "But," declared the Word of God, "they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." Verse 43.

Christ the Next World Ruler

There are to be no more universal world empires "until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him." Eze. 21:27. This is a declaration of the Almighty. Christ's kingdom is to be the next in succession. Hear it, as the prophet of God continues his interpretation:

"And 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 for ever. 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." Dan. 2:44,45.

This is God's program. Not a Hitler nor a Stalin nor a Hirohito, but the Christ of Calvary will become the next universal ruler. As He appears in the opening heavens, His face will far outshine the sun, and His garments will be as white as the light. His eyes will be as a flame of fire, and on His head will be many crowns. On His vesture, which has been dipped in blood, will be written in glowing characters, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." See Rev. 19: 11-16.

At that time the nations of earth will be broken in pieces, and become "like the chaff of the summer threshing floors," and will be blown away. Then they will be supplanted by the eternal and glorious kingdom of the Son of God. We are now living "in the days of these kings," and this is a sign that the time for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ is at hand.

Increase of Knowledge

Another sign of Christ's coming is revealed in the prophecy recorded in Dan. 12: 4: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro,