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The Night Is Far Spent

"The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent love among yourselves." -1 Peter 4:7, 8.

WRITTEN nineteen centuries ago, these words of St. Peter were never more important for us to remember than now, for the New Year finds all nations, despite anxious prayers and agonizings for peace, facing a titanic cataclysm which threatens to engulf humanity.

The Prophet Ezekiel draws a prophetic picture which portrays figuratively conditions in the modern world: "The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him. . . . All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water. They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord: . . . Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.... Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled" (Ezek. 7:15-27). "Evil on evil! says the Lord the Eternal -- it is coming, the hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" (Ezek. 7:5, 6, Moffatt).

WHITHER - CIVILIZATION?

While it is true that these and related prophecies had their first reference to the nation of Israel, predicting a time of trouble which ended in the complete overthrow of their nation at the end of the Jewish Age, yet their experience was but typical of a still greater and more extensive time of trouble now breaking upon nominal Christendom, and spreading to all mankind.

Each separate clause of this prophecy is having, or will have, its fulfillment in our day. "The vision is sure." The unerring voice of Scripture, through testimony and prophecy, teaches that human Civilization is now entering upon its darkest hour; that it is headed toward chaos and final dissolution; that sin has degraded and involved its victims until they are now brought face-to-face with utter and irretrievable ruin. True, according to those who question Biblical prophecy as an authentic source of evidence, the present anger of nations is due solely to economic, social, financial, and geographical differences, and many are the voices which boldly proclaim their solutions for earth's distress. The confidence of men, in their own wisdom and abilities, is not yet fully shaken. But as events progress, the realization will more and more dawn upon men's minds that the diseases afflicting humanity are so deep-rooted, that their despairing efforts to cure them will prove unavailing. Already we see fulfilled the words spoken by Jesus with prophetic foresight: "On earth anguish among the nations in their bewilderment at the roaring of the sea and its billows; while men's hearts are fainting for fear, and for anxious expectation of what is coming on the world. For the forces which control the heavens will be disordered" (Luke 21:25, 26, Weymouth). The last picture of human Civilization recorded in the Bible is one of chaos and utter confusion; days so dreadful that but for divine intervention they would lead to the extermination of the human race. (See Matt. 24:21, 22 and Mark 13:19, 20). What a frightful picture is here drawn; and if this were all the prospect divine writ held forth for mankind, the future would indeed be dark.

"O EARTH, EARTH, EARTH, HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD"

Horrible indeed would be the outlook did we not have the infallible Word of God assuring us of a glorious outcome. We have courage to speak of these terrible things only because of our full confidence that behind this dark cloud, hidden from human sight, is the glad sunrise of the New Day -- the Day of Messiah. With such a glorious hope -- the hope of the Church's glorification in the First Resurrection power, and the hope of the world's Millennial blessing -- God's people everywhere can lift up their heads and rejoice through their tears, even as their great Teacher nineteen centuries ago exhorted that they should do (Luke 21:28).

How we long to share with the groaning creation this joy in the knowledge of our God. O that men would heed the exhortation of the Prophet (Jer. 22:29) and hear the Word of the Lord. Then would they learn the real reason for the tragedy of earth. Then would they learn that the real cause, of which present events are only the logical outcome, had its beginning when "by one man's disobedience sin entered into the world and death as the result of sin, and thus death passed upon all men because all are sinners" (Rom. 5:12). There the groaning and dying of our race, to which the Apostle refers in Romans 8:22, 23, had its start. Men would learn further that God had foreknown the course of evil for the six Great Days of earth's history -- six thousand years -- and has prepared for the Great Seventh Day, which will also be a thousand years long. God describes it as the Day, or Epoch, in which Messiah upon the Throne will make all things new.

The long night of sorrow and strife will have taught mankind the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" and the dreadful consequence of disobedience to divine law. In the dawning of the new Day, righteousness will be enforced throughout the earth, not only by the word of the King, but by the divine power of his Kingdom. The words of the Prophet describing Messiah's Kingdom as the "desire of all nations" give us the correct thought. But this Kingdom will be established at a time of great commotion. Other Scriptures show that the time of trouble, a great "shaking" period (see Heb. 12:26), will be such a terrible storm of strife, bloodshed, trouble, that the world will have its fill and be nauseated. Thenceforth, under the guidance of the new administration of Messiah, the spirit of a sound mind will gradually come to mankind as a whole; and proportionately they will

turn to Messiah's Kingdom in loyal obedience, declaring, as says the Prophet, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us" (Isa. 25:9. See also Isa. 2:3).

The world, the groaning creation, knows not of the Divine Plan, and will not heed the Word of the Lord. Therefore the great time of trouble, now nearing a culmination, will break the stony hearts, bow down into the dust the proud, and break up the fallow ground with deep furrows of pain, trouble, sorrow, thus to make the world ready for the great blessings of the Millennial Kingdom which God has provided for mankind. During the Millennial reign, all the families of the earth will be blessed with recovery from death, and with enlightenment and restitution assistances to righteousness and eternal life; only the incorrigible dying the Second Death.

"BE YE THEREFORE SOBER"

While acknowledging the righteousness of God's judgments on the nations, and that the haughtiness of man must be brought low, the Lord's consecrated people, possessed of his Spirit, cannot in any sense rejoice at tribulations coming upon others. Their rejoicing can be only in respect to the glorious things which they hope to experience and know, by these outward signs, to be near. They rejoice not merely on their own behalf, but also on behalf of the whole world; for they have the assurance of the Scriptures that behind this time of trouble, which looms up as a dark cloud to cover the entire social world, there is a silver lining; and that shortly the glorious Sun of Righteousness will blaze forth, dispel every cloud and all shadows of ignorance and superstition, and bring to mankind the rich blessings of divine favor secured through the precious blood of Christ.

At present we are surrounded by the angry waves of human passions. Hate for fellowman is so widespread that the true Christian's mantle of charity is apt to be misconstrued by both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. The excited minds, the highstrung nerves, the anger, and the lack of sobriety of the peoples of earth under the terrific strain of world upheaval, require all the calmness and fortitude the Christian can muster. "Be sober and watch unto prayer," the Apostle enjoins. In this lies our strength. The tremendous agitation in the social order requires sober watchfulness over words and acts, with constant communion with our Father for the spiritual fortitude we shall all require to stand in this evil day. Our Master warned: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:34-36). And while we may not know the full significance of the words "escape all these things," yet they should bring forcefully to us all, the full realization that there is an "eye that never sleeps" which watches over its own. It is a part of the great lesson of faith and trust that we should be able to recognize the hand of the Lord in all our difficulties, to see the silver lining in every cloud of trouble, and to realize that all about us are the protecting powers of our God; that he holds us, as it were, in the hollow of his hand, and that nothing of evil or trouble can by any means hurt us if we abide in trust, faith, and obedience under his protecting care, seeking to learn the lessons which he would teach us. Thus he is bringing us to the desired haven. He is bringing us to that condition of heart and character which he can approve as worthy of life eternal, the glorious reward of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). We are content, therefore, to accept the storms and billows in the present time, and the tribulation necessary for our development, that we may be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.

"LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE"

And in these latter days, has not the Lord provided additional help for his waiting saints? Does not our cup run over? Has he not girded himself and served us already? Surely we can all bear witness to the fact.

Many years ago the Lord blessed one who, like King Saul of old, towered head and shoulders in spiritual things above his fellows. Through him there was poured forth an amazing volume of truth concerning God's purposes. This heritage of truth was given for the special purpose of strengthening the faith of the last members of the true Church, living in the midst of widespread apostasy and ever-increasing godlessness. Today this heritage is our comfort and strength. True, in some details, chiefly concerning the interpretation of types, chronology, and prophecy, there is some difference of opinion among the Lord's people. But the great body of truth, the great

unchangeable verities, is still our mutual cherished possession. On the broad principle enjoined by the Apostle's words, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5), and having laid the same "Rock" foundation and made the same consecration to our mutual Lord, can we not all, regardless of our own preferred grouping, go on to that fervent love St. Peter inculcates? Having mutually this special enlightenment from the Lord, can we not bear one another's burdens and so evidence to our Master that we are indeed his disciples and able to pass the last great test of the saints, the test of brotherly love? In these days when the finger of suspicion and distrust and misunderstanding may be directed by the world against God's people, shall we not the more seek one another's welfare and strive with all our might to shield, by ever-increasing love, our brother in Christ? Yes, brethren, with God's help, that we will do. May the fire of fervent love so burn in our hearts as to reveal even to the world, the indisputable proof of relationship to our blessed Lord.

"EVEN THE WINDS AND THE WAVES OBEY"

Brethren, we stand at the threshold of the last troublous days. The message of Present Truth binds us together. We find ourselves separated from the raging sea only by this vessel of Truth. At times it may seem that we are in danger of being overwhelmed by the angry waves about us. But let us call to mind the night in which our Lord sent the disciples by boat across the Sea of Galilee while he remained in a desert place to pray! Call to mind the storm which arose, and the great distress in which they were! Call to mind how later they beheld Jesus walking on the water! Call to mind how their hearts were at first affrighted but afterwards calmed as they realized that it was indeed their Lord and that he was present with them and had all power! Then call to mind how Peter at this time became so courageous that he even suggested a willingness to walk on the water if our Lord would consent! Call to mind his fear when he saw the billows tempestuous! Call to mind that finally our Lord himself entered into the ship, and that immediately it was at the land and there was a great calm!

These Many Years

Perhaps this narrative was given us as a picture of the experiences of the Church. Storms and trials have beset the way of the Lord's faithful all through the journey from Pentecost until now. We are nearing the port; and the realization of the Lord's favor and presence is our comfort and our strength. Let us continue to the end of the journey and presently we shall effect our landing on the other side of the veil. That will be glory for us, that will be satisfaction, that will be more than heart could wish or tongue could tell. "We shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness," when we share in his glory, when we shall be like him and see him as he is, when we shall participate with him in the glories of the Millennial Kingdom for the blessing of mankind!

"The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent love among yourselves."

- W. J. Siekman

These Many Years!

These many years! What lessons they unfold
Of grace and guidance through the wilderness,
From the same God that Israel of old
In the Shekinah glory did possess.
How faithful He, through all my griefs and fears
And constant murmurings, these many years!

God of the Covenant! From first to last,
From when I stood within that sprinkled door,
And o'er my guilt the avenging angel passed,
Thy better angel hath gone on before;
And naught but goodness all the way appears,
Unmerited and free, these many years!

Thy presence wrought a pathway through the sea;
Thy presence made the bitter waters sweet;
And daily have Thy hands prepared for me
Sweet, precious morsels - lying at my feet.
'Twas but to stoop and taste the grace that cheers,
And start refreshed, through all these many years!

What time I thirsted and earth's streams were dry,
What time I wandered and my hope was gone,
Thy hand hath brought a pure and full supply,
And, by a loving pressure, lured me on.
How oft that hand hath wiped away my tears
And written "Pardoned!" all these many years!

And what of discipline Thy love ordained
Fell ever gently on this heart of mine;
Around its briars was my spirit trained
To bring forth fruits of righteousness divine;
Wisdom in every check, and love appears
In every stroke, throughout these many years!

Lord, what I might have been, my spirit knows
Rebellious, petulant, and prone to stray;
Lord, what I am, in spite of flesh and foes,
I owe to grace that kept me in the way.
Thine be the glory! Merit disappears,
As back I look upon these many years.

Thine be the glory! Thou shalt have the praise
For all Thy dealings, to my latest breath;
A daily "Ebenezer" will I raise,
And sing "Salvation" through the vale of death --
To where the crown, the golden harp appears,
There to rehearse Thy love through endless years!

The Master's High Priestly Prayer

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." - John 17:21.

WHEN will the world believe that the Father sent the Son? From the language here employed in this prayer of our Master it is very evident that, in his view, before the world would believe on him, a state of oneness must needs be attained by his followers. Belief by the world is thus seen to be made contingent on unity or oneness on the part of his followers.

How tenderly solicitous is the prayer of our Lord for those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren; and of what stupendous import to the world are his words, for it is evident that the enlightenment and blessing of the world are dependent upon the oneness of his followers. Let us draw near with bated breath and listen, for it is the Master who is praying: "Father-that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Surely he who does not feel the pathos, the yearning, tender emotion, of the Master's supplication, has not the spirit of Christ "he is none of his." "Father -- that they all may be one . . . that the world may believe." What a challenge, too, is this prayer of Jesus, to the love and affection of his followers. Would we hasten the day when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep; when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams; when Jesus shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied? -- that day *cannot* come until first there come the spirit of unity to his followers, until they find themselves possessed of the spirit of harmony, of brotherly-kindness, of love.

A LOVE THAT BRINGS PEACE

Today, perhaps as never before, the world awaits, doubting, in the darkness of unbelief, *not having received the convincing proof for which Jesus prayed* the oneness of Christ's followers not yet being apparent. For the proof of our faith does not lie in learning but in living; not in a well developed argument, but in a holy life. It will not be found in logic, however masterly, but in love; in a love that is strong enough to overcome indifference, to conquer antipathy -- a love that knows how to be blind to unkindness, that can not only forgive but forget, that can melt prejudice and pride of opinion; that knows not only how to live and let live, but knows also how to think and let think; a love that brings with it an atmosphere of peace.

When the Gospel first began to be preached by our Lord and the Apostles, what a oneness was manifest in the Church, as the little band of followers sought to walk in the footsteps of the Master. They were only a humble folk, without wealth or scholarly attainment, or social standing, but they seemed to catch the spirit of the Master, and after Pentecost such a spirit of joy and love and faith and hope possessed them. and such a fervor of missionary zeal -- such a oneness of heart and action, that it almost seemed that the prayer of Jesus would find speedy fulfilment, and that the whole world would soon believe on him.

In the early centuries the Gospel message spread like wild-fire. In the language of the Revelator -- "It went forth conquering and to conquer." (Rev. 6:2.) Just to read the story of those early days is enough to make one's heart beat faster. Well might the powers that were in those days be astonished, as they witnessed the power of the Gospel in the lives of those who received it, giving

to believers such a vision of our glorious hope as enabled them to stand undaunted in the face of cruel deaths, to meet the furious hate of their persecutors undismayed; nay more, to meet that hate with a gentleness, a love, a compassion, which only close followers of Christ can display.

COMPROMISE BETWEEN CHURCH AND WORLD

Alas, the rider on the white horse, which seems to symbolize that period of the Church's history, was followed by other horsemen, as those of us who are familiar with our Lord's Revelation are aware, and ere long, as history shows, a great compromise was effected between the Church and the world. Since then, the story of the Church has often enough been a history of hatred, of narrowness and stupidity, of inconceivable bigotry and brutality. What crime against God and man has the Church not committed! How appalling is the record! As we read the pages of history, the outrages there revealed fill our minds with horror, especially as we bear in mind that they were perpetrated in the holy name of Jesus.

Yet through all the centuries, amid wrangling bigots and proud tyrants, the true faith was kept alive. Though the Church as a whole was not Christian -- indeed became Antichristian, some few were found at all times who had not defiled their garments. These have been the salt of the earth, the light of the world. As another has said:

"If one seeks an apostolic succession, here it is, unbroken and uninterrupted -- a shining tradition of vision and service. It is in their gentle lives silhouetted against dark backgrounds, that we trace the history of the hidden Church -- the little flock."

Though not inspired as were the Apostles, they were entrusted by God and by Jesus with the Gospel, and they guarded it for us of today at the cost of their lives. They kept watch over it as of a sacred treasure, as keepers of a holy fire which must never be stamped out. They yielded their lives to the sweet, mellowing influence of the holy spirit of love and truth, though it meant for them certain privation, loss and hardship beyond our experience. They enjoyed withal a fellowship of spirit which not even the curse of sectarianism could destroy.

And if these with their feeble light were enabled to preserve a fellowship of spirit even in the midst of sectarian bondage and in the darkness of the Dark Ages, will not the Lord expect at least as much from us as we face the issues which confront us today? With the advancing light the old sectarianism is seen to be not only sinful butt absurd; and yet all of us must be aware that *this spirit of sectarianism is as active in our midst today as it was in the centuries that are past*. It is the height of folly -- it does not even indicate the wisdom of this world, much less that which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, or wrangling, and without hypocrisy.

CHRIST OUR ALL IN ALL

Brethren, let us thank God that our faith is not in a creed, but in a person, our blessed Lord Jesus himself, whose personality embraces every grace, in loyalty to whom we can all find fellowship and unity. How true is the saying, "What we believe divides us -- Whom we believe unites us." That which enabled our brethren who have gone before, to maintain the unity of spirit even in the midst of sectarian bondage, was the realization that notwithstanding their differences Christ was their all in all, and this realization must be our salvation today.

"I," said Jesus, "if I be lifted up, will draw all, men unto me." This saying of Jesus, we know, is to have its grand fulfilment in the coming Age, when all shall have their eyes open to behold our

Lord -- when he shall indeed be the desire of all nations. But while we await that time with calm confidence, we must not do so passively, but with breathless eagerness. We yearn to see him take his rightful place in the hearts of all now. And if this cannot yet be in the world, it must be in the Church.

Somewhere we have read of the sin of making a Christ of one's opinions -- a rather remarkable expression, meaning that there are some -- let us be extremely careful that we are not among them -- who think that they are worshiping Christ, when all the time they are worshiping their own opinions. They follow their own prejudices -- believing that what is habitual with them must be essential for everybody -- and imagine that they are obeying the precepts of our Lord.

Surely there is no one amongst us so self-confident as to believe that he has the exact viewpoint of the Master on each and every problem that is before the Church in these difficult days. Even the great Apostle Paul was not ashamed to confess that he was in perplexities at times. It will not be such a very great humiliation for us, then, to admit that we, too, are sometimes at a loss to know just what to do -- just which way to turn. Even when we have been very sure of our ground, and the positions that we have taken, things have not always worked out just precisely as we had expected. It would be foolish indeed for us to deify our opinions and interpretations, and demand that others accept our thought on this, that, or the other question, before we can work with them in the fellowship and service of the Master.

If Jesus were to stand in our midst today, we venture the assertion that he would identify himself with none of us; but with what gladness, nay, in what a delirium of delight, would we identify ourselves with him.

Brethren, Jesus *does* stand in our midst today, and how manifest it is that none can claim him exclusively as their own. No -- as in the glorious vision -- Jesus is walking *in the midst* of the golden candlesticks, *and thrice happy are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

Our differences need not -- nay, they must not, disturb our fellowship. Differences are unhappy only when they sharpen tempers, and occasion ill will. Otherwise they may be profitable and result in a larger education for us in the school of Christ. Some one has said that "Identity of sentiment with difference of opinion" is requisite to happy company. These are no less requisite to Christian fellowship and to the health of the Church.

Some of us have made grave blunders in the past in this matter of fellowship, but how great will be our mistake if we fail to learn by these experiences. The footstep followers of Jesus have been given God's own holy spirit, and those who yield themselves to its sweet influence, find themselves possessed of a strange wisdom - a wisdom which knows how to climb over the walls of separation which others build, which knows how to reach through the fences which others construct, and clasp in warm and loving greeting the hand of a brother spirit. "Many waters cannot quench love."

How blessed is this fellowship, this oneness in Christ which may be enjoyed by the people of God--this oneness for which the Master prayed! It is a fellowship of joy and a fellowship of suffering--of joy in a common anticipation of the future glory, as also of our present privileges in communion with our Lord; and of suffering in mutual participation of the preliminary trials to secure that end. Thus the members of the one Body are bound together in one bond of love and

fellowship and confidence and sympathy and common interest. May our love abound yet more and more one toward another, even as our Master prayed, that thus "the world may believe. "

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence will avail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;

We kneel, how weak!-we rise, how full of power
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with thee?"

"Even at the Doors"

"What will be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?"-Matthew 24:3 (Diaglott).

"When ye shall see all these things, know that he is near."-Matthew 24:33 (margin).

IN our September-October issue we grouped the "signs and groanings promised to precede a second birth" under five main captions, as follows:

1. Gentile Times
2. Ecclesiastical Heavens
3. Israel
4. General Social Conditions
5. Chronology

The first two of these five were discussed in the September-October and in the November-December *Herald* issues. Here we consider, briefly, the remaining three.

SIGNS IN ISRAEL

In Matthew 24:32, 33 our Lord makes the following observation: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."

In the margin an alternative translation is given:

"When ye shall see all these things, know that *he* is near."

In Luke's account (Luke 21:29-31) the last phrase reads

"Know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

In both the Old Testament and the New, the fig tree is used to represent Israel (Joel 1:7; Jeremiah 24; Luke 13:6-9). When, therefore, our Lord presents a parable concerning a fig tree, he is really referring, symbolically, to Israel.

RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Earlier in these discussions, we said that we should be watching and intelligently reading the signs of the times and noting how they are fitting in with the prophetic forecasts. So far as Israel is concerned, these signs, according to the unanimous testimony of the Old Testament Prophets, should be looked for in three main directions, namely

1. Restoration of the land.
2. Restoration *to* the land.
3. Restoration to *God*.

The land is to be recovered from the state of desolation in which it has lain during the long period of Gentile rule. As Isaiah expresses it in that wonderful 35th chapter of his:

"The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. . . . in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

Is this sign in evidence today? Is the land, in fact, being restored? He would be blind, indeed, who could not see this sign. Restoration of the land, admittedly, is far from complete, but the economic growth of the country in recent times, along both agricultural and industrial lines, has been nothing short of miraculous; and this, too, notwithstanding the hardships and difficulties which beset the nation of Israel under present conditions.

And what of the second sign? Are there any indications that the people of Israel are being restored *to* the land? Yes, indeed, there are. Even as far back as 1878, over 90 years ago, the year of the famous Berlin Congress, faithful watchers realized that *a change* in the status of Israel *was taking place*. That conference, with the war that preceded it, was without doubt a most marked stage in the downfall of the Ottoman power - a stage in the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire, which was destined to be completely broken up at the end of World War I.

Then, too, it was surely no mere coincidence that when the British General Allenby, without firing a shot, captured Jerusalem from the Turks, the date of that event, perhaps one of the most important in Israel's national life, namely December 9, 1917, should prove to be exactly 1335 lunar years from the starting point of the Mohammedan calendar. Daniel, in the 12th chapter of his Book, has something to say about a symbolic period of 1335 days. While Allenby's capture of Jerusalem may not have been a complete and final fulfillment of Daniel's forecast, it is certainly most remarkable, to say the least, that this event took place exactly 1335 lunar years from the birthday of that particular Gentile power which, for so long, had desolated the Holy Land and trodden down Jerusalem.

JACOB'S TROUBLE

But what of the third sign mentioned? Is there any evidence that not only is the restoration of the land in progress, not only is the nation being regathered *to* that land, but that the hearts of the people of Israel, as a nation, are returning *to the God of their fathers*?

It must be admitted that while there are, indeed, some signs in this direction, they are not very pronounced. The economic progress of the country, both in relation to the land and the people, is still largely secular. With all due respect to the few devout souls in Israel, there is little of the faith of Abraham to be seen in Israel today.

As a matter of fact this state of affairs should not surprise us. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah -- each has cautioned us to expect exactly what we see in progress today. Briefly summarizing their forecasts, my understanding of them is that first there was to be the regathering of a representative remnant of Israel, not in the faith of Abraham but in unbelief. This is now taking place.

But what follows? I answer: After a brief interval of prosperity there comes a time of anguish. To quote Jeremiah 30:7, it is the time of Jacob's trouble. What is it, according to the united testimony of the four Prophets I have named, that occasions this dark hour which threatens to fall on Israel in the nighttime of her sad history? It is nothing more nor less than a gathering of envious nations against her, graphically described in Ezekiel 38:1-13. In these verses the chief actors in this yet

future struggle in Palestine are named. However, we may not be too sure of our identifications. But one thing is quite definite, the battle will not end in triumph for Israel's enemies. "Why not?" does one ask? I answer: *Because it is the set time for Israel's deliverance.* The Psalmist tells us this in Psalm 102:13 -

"Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come."

Evidently the same spirit which operated in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah inspired the words of the Psalmist. The time to favor Zion, "yea, the set time, is come."

When is that to be? Is there any way of ascertaining this information? To this question I reply: Yes, I think there is. With no desire to speak dogmatically, I am, nevertheless, convinced that we may know today, if not precisely, certainly within a very close approximation, our position on the stream of time.

Foregoing we said, in reference to Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), "one thing is quite definite, the battle will not end in triumph for Israel's enemies." No! God himself, represented by Israel's great Messiah, will intervene. Of this there is no question, for, after telling us that it is the time of Jacob's trouble, Jeremiah goes on to say: "But he shall be saved out of it." According to Zechariah 14:2, 3, God will go forth and fight against Israel's enemies as he fought in the day of battle. Isaiah, too, speaks in a similar vein. - Isa. 28:21.

That will indeed be a great and wonderful day in Israel's history, an hour of triumph such as they have never known before, greater even than when they came out of Egypt; greater than when they triumphed over Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea; greater than when they entered the Promised Land and the walls of Jericho fell down before them.

There is, however, something greater, more solemn and more blessed, than mere deliverance and triumph over their enemies that Israel is to experience. And that is God's final conquest over them.

On former occasions, when God had given them the victory over their enemies, it was not long before they became proud in heart and rebelled against the Rock of their salvation. But this will never be true of them again. For he, their great Messiah, who comes to conquer their foes, comes also to subdue their hearts. Hence, great as their triumph will be when they return from the victory, their glorious day of triumph will end in self-abasement and tears. How this wonderful change will be brought about, how the stubborn heart of unbelieving and gainsaying Israel will at last be broken, we are told in Zechariah 12:10:

"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications"

or, as Jeremiah, speaking as the Lord's mouthpiece expresses the matter:

"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers: in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:

"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" - Jeremiah 31: 31-34.

SIGNS IN THE GENERAL SOCIAL CONDITIONS

So much for "Signs in Israel." Let us now consider "Signs in the General Social Conditions."

In Daniel 12:4 the words of the revealing angel are to the effect that a correct understanding of all the visions given to Daniel would not be granted until "the time of the end," but that *then* such understanding would be granted, because "many should run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

It is hard to believe, but it is nevertheless true, that a couple of hundred years ago the fastest means of travel was on horseback, whereas today we have trains, automobiles, steamships, and airplanes, moving at fast speeds, almost anywhere in the world, -- to say nothing of the fantastic speeds of our astronauts in their space travel!

Again, the increase in knowledge in our day is unprecedented. Furthermore, not only is knowledge along all lines greatly increased, by the experts in every branch of scientific research, but such knowledge is widely diffused. Almost overnight it ceases to be knowledge possessed by the experts only, but the whole world becomes informed, or may be.

This has come about by means of free education, libraries, the circulation of magazines and newspapers, the inventions of radio and television.

Moreover, this increase in knowledge is not restricted to secular matters, but is true also of spiritual knowledge. What a "feast of fat things" has been ours, as more and more of God's plans and purposes for the whole race of mankind have unrolled before our wondering eyes!

In Luke 21:25, 26 our Lord describes *the conditions of our day* in the following words

"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."

Daniel 12:1 speaks of a "time of trouble." Jesus echoes his words in Matthew 24:21, and then, in Matt. 24:22, adds the following significant statement:

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."

How this could be was always an unsolved problem until our day. Even the carnage of World Wars I and II did not offer an adequate solution, for the world's population increased, rather than diminished, during those terrible years. But with the advent of "The Atomic Age" our Lord's words are no longer difficult to understand. "Except *those* days be shortened" -- to what days must he be referring to? Surely the days of "The Atomic Age," *the days in which we live*. How glad we are to note his further words, at the end of verse 22, "those days shall be shortened."

CHRONOLOGICAL SIGNS

Now a brief word, in closing, on "Chronological Signs."

Many Christians take exception to the study of chronology on the grounds that our Lord and his Apostles founded their exhortations to constant watchfulness on the grounds of our ignorance of the time of his return and of the end of the age. In support of their position they quote his words

"Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"; And again:

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." - Mark 13:32, 33.

It is urged that, even after his resurrection our Lord said, in reply to the question of his disciples as to the time at which he would restore again the kingdom to Israel,

"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7); and that, consequently, we must be wrong in attempting to indicate from the prophecies of Daniel, the date of the end of this age.

It should, however, be remembered, that our Lord made use, not only of the expressions mentioned, but also of others, *which inculcate the opposite duty* of observing "the signs of the times," and of drawing from them the legitimate conclusions as to the proximity of his return and of the end of the age. He not only said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man," but he also said, "When ye shall see all these things, *know that it is near, even at the doors*"; "*When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand*" (Matt. 24:33; Luke 21:31).

Our Lord thus inculcated constant watchfulness and hopeful expectation, on two distinct and contrasted grounds; *first*, on that of his people's *ignorance* of the exact time of his return; and *secondly*, on that of their *knowledge*, derived from fulfilled predictions, that it must be close at hand. He said: "*Ye know not*," and he also said, "*Know ye*." He taught the same double truth in his parables.

Without entering into any discussion of details, it may suffice here to say that sacred prophecy presents us with three main periods; and that all three, starting from widely separate dates in the past, converge in our day, thus indicating our days are the last days of this age. The three periods are:

1. The 25 centuries of the "Times of the Gentiles."
2. The 23 centuries of the Sanctuary Cycle.
3. The 12 1/2 centuries of the duration of the Papal and Mohammedan Apostasies.

The initial eras (*eras*, be it noted, not *dates*) of these periods are perfectly clear. The first starts from the Babylonian Captivity era; the second, from the Persian Restoration era; the third, from the breaking up of the old Roman Empire. This being so, it must surely be apparent that all three of these main periods of chronology converge in our day, and must, therefore, expire in the comparatively near future.

"Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Heb. 10:35). "*The end of all things is at hand: be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer.*" - 1 Peter 4:7.

- (Continued in next issue)

- P. L. Read

The Question Box

Hebrews 4:9-11.

THE Scripture to which our question refers reads as follows:

Heb. 4:9 - "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

Heb. 4:10 - "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Heb. 4:11 - "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man

Question:

Who are "the people of God"? What is the "rest" that "remaineth" for them (Heb. 4:9) ? And when do they "enter into that rest" (Heb. 4:11) ? In your reply please include a discussion of Heb. 4:10. What connection, if any, does it have with Heb. 4:9?

Answer:

The "people of God" are the overcomers of this Gospel Age. The "rest" that "remaineth" for them, is that complete satisfaction of heart and mind which awaits them when they enter the joys of their Lord on the other side of the veil. By faith and consecration, however, this rest is entered by them here and now, in this present life. Heb. 4:10, although apparently offering no logical support to verse 9, is vitally connected therewith, as we will endeavor to show in a later paragraph.

TWO ASPECTS OF REST

Rest may be understood in two senses: (1) rest *from* work and (2) rest *in* work. With us both forms of rest are experienced. In various ways, with brain or hand or both, we work. When the labor has been especially hard, we become rested and refreshed by ceasing from it. We are enabled to return to it, whatever it is, and to do it better, because we left it for a season. This is rest *from* work, a most true and refreshing rest.

But is mere cessation from toil our best and most welcome refreshment, our truest rest? By no means! To see our work well done; to search into it and find no flaw; to feel that it comes up to that conception, that ideal, of it, which we had framed in our mind - *this*, when we get it (which is not often, we fear) gives us a far more perfect and restful satisfaction than mere sitting or lying still. This is rest *in* our work as distinguished from rest *from* our work; and the one is immeasurably higher than the other.

GOD'S REST

Thus, only very much more so, must it have been, always, with the Eternal God. Thus must it have been with him in the period we call "creation." Day by *day*, *this* consummate Artist, this master Musician, this peerless Poet, may be seen at work (in the first two chapters of Genesis). The work proceeds happily. Day by day God sees that the work of the day is good. "And God saw that it was good," is the familiar refrain appended to the story of each day's toil. At last the six

days come to an end, and with them the work. And now God surveys all that his hands have made -the heaven and the earth, land and sea, day and night; sun, moon and stars; fish, birds, beasts; man and woman. As he surveys them he rejoices in his finished work, and pronounces them not "good" only, but "very good." They answer to his thought. They are *his* thought, in varied and beautiful forms. He takes delight in them and blesses them. *This is his picture*; and it is a finished and triumphant work of art. This is his *music*; and it is perfect harmony, perfectly rendered. This is his *poem*; and it is without flaw. He rests *in* it and is refreshed.

It is true, of course, as the Scriptures record, that (the works of creation being finished, Gen. 2:1, 2; Heb. 4:3, 4) God rested *from* them; but it is also true that his is a rest (a sense of refreshment, Exod. 31:17) *in* them. Indeed, the idea of rest, in his case, as mere relief from weariness, is repugnant to us, as it is to the whole tenor of Scripture. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" (Isa. 40:28).

Moreover, the term "rest" as applied to God, not only could not imply relief from weariness, but also could contain no suggestion of inaction. Indeed, no less an authority than our Lord Jesus himself, affirmed: "My Father worketh *hitherto*" -- *that* is to say, up to that very hour in which Jesus made the statement (John 5:17). Having ceased *from* the works of creation, and while resting *in* them, God proceeded to work on a higher plane. Rising from the works of creation, he commenced the work of sustaining and providentially administering them. And rising yet higher, he proceeded to the work of redemption, including his "New Creation." And who can doubt but that *these* works of providence and redemption (which he is accomplishing during his day of rest from his works of creation -- a day which, so far as we have been able to ascertain from the Scriptures, *will never end*) who can doubt but that *these* works do but heighten and intensify his "rest." *

* Foregoing we have ascribed the works of (1) creation, (2) providence, and (3) redemption to God. However, there is a school of thought which ascribes only the works of creation and providence to the Father, that of redemption being ascribed to the Son. The truth is that all three are works of God (the Father, the Great Jehovah). In all three, however, his Only-begotten Son has been and will continue to be his honored Agent. - John 1:13; Col. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 8:6.

GOD'S REST OFFERED TO MANKIND

Rest *from* work may be considered as the negative, and rest *in* work the positive form of God's rest. In God's rest man was destined to share. But he failed to attain it at the creation, for after that, all too soon, came the fall.

When God began dealing with the typical people, Israel, his offer of rest was first presented in the negative form. Even God himself condescended *thus* to rest, although, as we have seen, this was far from realizing his idea of rest, either for himself or for man. *It was, however, the only idea of rest which Israel could grasp.* The Pharisees, at the time of our Lord's first advent, do not appear to have understood in any degree the significance of his words when he insisted that his Sabbath keeping should be like that of his Father, who "worketh until now"; that the sabbath *he* regarded, was one in which *works* (good works, of course) were appropriate -- a sabbath made *for* man, not one for which man had been made. The Jewish sabbath, therefore, was God's offer of rest in its most elementary (its negative) form, of rest from work.

CANAAN REST TYPICAL

The offer of rest in Canaan went beyond this negative aspect. While falling short of the perfect rest which remained for "us (the Gospel Age Church), it was nevertheless a development in that direction. Israel, however, that is to say, all those who came out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, so provoked God by their disobedience -- their lack of faith and lack of fidelity -- that he would not permit them even to enter the Land of Promise, much less would he allow them to enter *his rest* (Heb. 3:1-19). Joshua *did* take their *children* into Canaan, but even they did not realize the true rest there, for (as our Author points out in Heb. 4:8, where the word "Jesus" should be "Joshua") if Joshua *had* given them rest, there would have been no occasion for God, by his holy spirit, to have extended the invitation once again, as he does in Psalm 95:7, 8, "*Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.*" The fact that this gracious invitation was once again made *then*, "after so long a time" (Heb. 4:7), (that is to say, after so long a time as the interval between the entrance into Canaan and the date of Psalm 95) shows that the promised rest had not yet become their portion.

In view of all this failure on the part of mankind in general and of Israel in particular, to obtain the rest promised, what shall we conclude? Obviously-so reasons *unbelief-we* must conclude that the promised rest will never be possessed; it is nothing but a beautiful mirage!

This, however, is not the conclusion of our Author. Instead, he exclaims: "Not so! I happen to be acquainted with God. He is my Father. Perhaps the most wonderful thing about him is that he has a craving to share this rest of his with his intelligent creatures. Moreover his desire is so intense that, though the invitation to share his rest remains without response for centuries, the effect is merely to extend the horizon; meantime renewing the invitation. My Father craves intelligent fellowship *and will not be denied*. The King's house must be filled with guests. Surely you will recall our Master's own parable (Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24). Since they to whom the good tidings (of entering into his rest) were first preached, entered not in because of unbelief, it remaineth that some (that is, some others) must enter therein" (Heb. 4:6). *Our Author's inference*, from Psalm 95:11, thus seen, *is based on the gracious character of God*.

GOD'S REST REALIZED BY CHRIST

At this point we turn to Heb. 4:13 for guidance in properly understanding Heb. 4:10. In the Authorized Version, Heb. 4:13 reads:

"But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Rotherham, Moule, and others, however, have pointed out a preferred translation, which reads

"But all things are naked and exposed to his eyes: -- *As to whom is our discourse.* (Italic ours.)

Ah, yes! Christ is his theme from beginning to end of his epistle. If in our attempt to follow his involved discussions, we find ourselves, at times, in danger of forgetting the main theme, our Author will not long permit us to do so. Christ is the theme of his discourse, and if we do but remember this *as we ponder Heb. 4:10*, the reflection cannot fail to prove helpful in reaching the proper understanding of that verse.

In the Authorized Version, it reads:

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

This verse is one of peculiar difficulty. It is not surprising that scholars differ in their expositions of it. These expositions fall into two groups, which, freely translated, are:

(1) "Whosoever has entered into God's rest, has ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

(2) "He, Christ, entered into God's rest, having himself ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

In support of the second view a number of reasons have been advanced, which may be summarized as follows:

(a) The definite phrase, "he who entered"; (not as R.V. "he that is entered") .

(b) The emphatic pronoun, "himself."

(c) The historic tense "entered upon rest"; (not as R.V. "hath rested").

(d) The implied contrast with Joshua (Josh. 4:8).

(e) That otherwise there is no mention of Jesus' experience or achievements between Heb. 2:1, and Heb. 4:13.

(f) That otherwise read, the verse offers no logical support to Heb. 4:9, but interpreted thus supplies the ground on which the Sabbath -- rest is offered to Christ's followers.

While at first sight this second view may be surprising, it gains in beauty, the more it is considered. God's rest which is set before us, our Forerunner (our Joshua) has already entered. He who once said, "I must work while it is called Today" (John 9:4), on entering into God's rest, ceased from his own works, as God did from his. He said, "It is finished" (John 5:36; John 17:4; John 19:30). Joshua gave Israel no deep and satisfying rest; but Jesus (our Joshua) Son of God, has entered into rest on our behalf, and by him, we too, may enter. He it is, whom Heb. 4:10 represents, with a marked and isolating emphasis, as having "himself entered into rest." Thus understood, the verse does not stand alone and unconnected, but prepares the reader to return, after having seen the supremacy of Jesus over Moses and Joshua, to the consideration of his representative character, his high priesthood, already mentioned at the end of Heb. 2 and the beginning of Heb. 3.

In our consideration of Heb. 4:10 foregoing, we have endeavored to distinguish the two main viewpoints of scholars, and we confess that if we had to choose between them, we should take the second. But why not combine them? Since the rest that Jesus realized was not for himself alone, but for all who share his fellowship; since he could and did offer the rest of salvation to all who came to him -- "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28); and even the deeper rest of consecration to those who would take his yoke and learn of him (Matt. 11:29, 30). Since these things are so, may we not understand from Hebrews 4:10 that *Christ first, and we after him*, are to cease from our own works as God did from his? It would surely seem so.

THE REST OF FAITH

At the outset we said that by faith and consecration, God's rest is entered by us here and now, in this present life. This thought has been beautifully expressed by the poet in the following lines:

Canst thou not see
That there remains another rest for thee?
There is a rest which still he waits to give --
A rest wherein we all may daily live --
The rest whereby,
As in his death, by faith, we die,
So he will live in us,
And living thus
Will change our death to life -- a life no longer ours,
But his, renewed with resurrection powers.
O now receive
The calm, deep peace which comes as we believe
That all the works, and zeal, and strife,
With which we sometimes sought to fill our life,
Are vain and dead, at best:
Thus shalt thou understand, and enter into rest.

In the Manna for May 18 we have a choice paragraph bearing directly on the passage. We quote it here as a fitting close to the foregoing discussion.

"Our rest in the Lord is as complete as is our belief in him. He who believes fully *rests* fully; he who believes only partially *rests* but partially. The ideal condition of the spiritual Israelite is the attainment of a perfect rest, a perfect Sabbath-keeping, in his present experience, and a waiting and laboring for another and still more complete rest -- the actual rest of the perfected condition -- the rest that remains for the people of God."

- P. L. Read

Calamities Why Permitted?

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." - Isaiah 45:7.

Where were you on May 31 last year? On that day, at 3:23 p.m., 250 towns and cities in Peru were destroyed. That earthquake, largest natural disaster in the Western Hemisphere, destroyed an area equal in size to the six states constituting New England! 75,000 died; tens of thousands were injured; 500,000 were left homeless.

Not to mention other (serious but lesser) catastrophes, six months after Peru came Pakistan. There, where 200,000 were killed by cyclone and tidal waves, the unspeakable horror was magnified beyond description by the specter of millions more facing death from starvation and pestilence.

How do you help people who have lost everything but hope? That, of course, is one's first consideration. Compassionate folk, of every faith, unite, on an international scale, in giving this the first priority. Doctors, nurses, medicine, clothing, and food are rushed to the disaster areas; and temporary shelters are provided. Soon thereafter, the enormous task of rebuilding homes gets under way, and of making arrangements to provide the necessities of life, for perhaps a year or more, for the helpless survivors. All this, of course, depends on continuing international help and generosity.

In times like these, the old "Permission of Evil" question is bound to recur. Readers ask:

Could not God have prevented these catastrophes? And if he could, why did he not do so?

These and related questions are discussed helpfully in an article written by Brother Russell in the early days of his ministry. Believing the lessons he drew at that time are peculiarly applicable to today's events, we have condensed the following paragraphs from his pen, written in February 1884. - Editorial Committee.

ACCOUNTS of the widespread and destructive floods of these past months, with their accompanying distress, have ere this reached you through the daily press. Such like events as floods, fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, pestilences, cyclones, etc., have always elicited much comment both from press and pulpit regarding their cause.

The most commonly attributed cause is that God has sent the calamity as a special punishment for supposed greater wickedness of the people of the suffering districts, and as *a warning to others*. Another and growing view is that it just *happened so* from *natural* causes; and that, if there is a God, he either cannot help such things, or does not care to do so. For our part, we cannot endorse either of these views.

The reasons which lead people in general to suppose these calamities to be "special judgments" are founded, we believe, mainly on the dealings of God with Israel, upon whom he sent calamities, captivities, etc., as national punishments for national sins. But let us remember that Israel was a peculiar people, chosen of God for a special purpose, and, like the saints of the Gospel Age, dealt with in a peculiar manner, different from the world. To them he said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) Israel was the only nation which Jehovah directly governed; therefore he chastised their sins, and made his promises to them, while other nations were left under the dominion of Satan, the prince of this world, until he whose right it is, shall have come and established the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens.

While remembering that God has used calamities, such as the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom, as punishments and examples of an overthrow of the ungodly, it should not be forgotten that those were examples of those who should afterward live ungodly. And these *examples* are not examples of God's dealings in the present time, but are examples of the punishment or destruction awaiting the finally incorrigible during or at the close of the Millennial judgment period, or day. That Peter so applies those calamities as examples of the *future*, see 2 Peter 2:4-9.

In Jesus' day some had the same impression, that great, disasters indicated God's special displeasure but Jesus corrected them, saying "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise PERISH."

These words of Jesus contain the key to what we believe is the correct view of this subject in the last word, *perish*. The fact is that the *great calamity* DEATH, of which pestilences, earthquakes, floods, etc., are only *incidentals*, has passed upon ALL MEN, because all are sinners. (Rom. 5:12.) We have become so accustomed to *death*, the great calamity which is rapidly swallowing up the whole race, that it, the greatest of all losses, and the cause of all others, is looked upon as a proper and natural matter. If, however, things were properly considered, *death* as a whole would be seen as the great calamity, and the floods, etc., which *only hasten* it to a few, would be of comparatively little importance.

As *death*, the great calamity and curse, was caused by sin, so all these calamities spring from the same cause, and are under the control of him that has the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14), whose dominion and power, thank God, is soon to be taken away and given to the Prince of Peace. As death is the result of sin, so are pestilences, tornadoes, etc.

By one man's disobedience, *death* with its numerous channels of sickness and disaster passed upon all men, and those who meet it in one way avoid it in others; but all meet it in some form.

This will be apparent when we remember that when Adam became a sinner, not only did the curse of *death* fall upon him, but the entire dominion of his kingdom-the earth -suffered, and is in a cursed condition. (Gen. 3:17.) For a time Satan is permitted to usurp the dominion of earth, and while seemingly working out his own plans, he at the same time acts as the agent of justice, to execute the penalty of sin. This being true, he is the one who by permission exercises the destructive power upon the earth; and Jehovah does not interfere because mankind has justly come under the curse of a violated law, death; and because man is gaining a valuable lesson under the present dominion of evil and death, which will benefit him when the *curse is* lifted not only legally, but *actually*, by the Redeemer who for *this* cause was manifested "that he might destroy DEATH [the great catastrophe in all its forms] and him that hath the power of death, [and who brings to pass the various calamities] that is, the devil."

As soon as the new Prince, Immanuel, takes possession of the Kingdom, a great change will begin, both in the world of nature and of mankind. The curse being canceled will be removed, and the blessings purchased by the "precious blood of Christ" will be bestowed. So great will be the change under the new administration, that in symbol it is called a new heavens (new spiritual ruling power). Behold he will make all things new; he will *re-new* or restore all things to harmony with God, and to a condition which from God's standpoint, is "very good."

Hence we regard those disasters, not as special punishments, but as parts of the general curse, results of sin; but all working out in harmony with God's design an ultimate good to those rightly

exercised thereby. We have heretofore seen that the Prophet Job was made a type of mankind; that the disaster and trouble and losses which befell him illustrated the losses sustained by mankind, and that his restoration to favor and after-blessing, foreshadowed the "restitution of all things" to mankind. (Acts 3:19.) And we call to mind that the source of his trouble was Satan (Job 1:12), whom God in wisdom *permitted* to have power over him. As then the whirlwind, etc., was the agent of Satan, so we claim it is today. So, too, it was in Jesus' day. Jesus did not go about opposing the Father's will. If the Father had *caused* the death of Lazarus, would Jesus have opposed him by undoing his work? If Jehovah had caused the storm on the Sea of Galilee, which nearly overwhelmed the Lord and his disciples, would Jesus have been justified in stilling the tempest? But if the sickness and death and storms which Jesus counteracted were the work of Satan, the present "prince of the world," then all is clear, and we and all creation groan and travail and wait for the glorious reign of the new prince, whose relief is foreshadowed by the acts of his earthly ministry, praying, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth." When the night of sin and suffering and weeping is over, and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings for the various troubles of man and of earth, the mists of ignorance will be dispelled, and it will be seen that not Jehovah, but man's sin and his present prince, Satan, has been the direct cause of earth's woe and sorrow.

The New Heavens and the New Earth

And I beheld new heavens and earth,
All radiant as the morning sun,
Rejoicing on their day of birth;
For the first heaven and earth were gone.
And Eden spread o'er hill and lea
Its peace; and there was no more sea.

And I beheld afar in air,
Descending out of heaven from God,
As a chaste bride adorned and fair,
A city mortal never trod,
Shining with many a peerless gem, -
The pure, the new Jerusalem.

And a great voice from heaven I heard
Which said, "Behold, the dwelling-place
Of God, the house His hands have reared;
That in His glory and His grace
He may with men for ever dwell,
As God with us, Immanuel.

"For His own hand from every eye
Shall wipe away the tears of grief;
And none shall languish, none shall die,
And perish like the autumn leaf;
And pain be at an end for aye,
For former things are passed away."

And He that sat upon the throne
Spake thus: "Lo, all things I renew !"
And bid me write in joyful tone,
For faithful are the words and true;
And said unto me: "It is done!
The First, the Last, am I alone.

"To him that is athirst I give
The fountain infinite and free,
The flowing spring whose waters live;
And his for ever shall it be.
Who overcomes hath all things won;
I am his God, and he My son.

"But unbelievers, the unclean,
The murderer, and man of lust,
Unsuited for that holy scene, -
The foul, the false, and the unjust, -
Are sentenced to that lake of flame
Which heaven 'the second death' doth name.

And, lo! an angel, of the seven
Whose holy hands the vials bare
Of the last judgment acts of heaven,
Drew near, and talking with me there,
"Come hither," said he, "to my side,
And I will show thee the Lamb's bride."

And he upbore me to the brow
Of a majestic mountain high,
Whence, while the world lay far below,
He turned my glances to the sky,
And made me see a city fair
Descending in the ambient air.

She had the glory of her God,
Her light was crystalline and clear
As shining jasper; round her stood
A wall with gates, and angels near
Guarded those glistening gates full well,
Named from the tribes of Israel.

Three several gates on every side,
On east and north, and south and west
Her wall had twelve foundations wide,
With names inscribed for ever blest;
On each foundation was the name
Of an apostle of the Lamb.

A golden reed the angel bare
To measure the celestial frame;
The city formed a mighty square,
Its length and breadth and height the same;
Twelve thousand furlongs every way
The bright and beauteous city lay.

And twelve times twelve he measured more,
The stature of the jasper wall;
The measure of the reed he bore
Was human, yet angelical;
The city was of worth untold,
All crystal and transparent gold.

How rich were its foundations fair!
Chalcedony and chrysolite,
And jasper, sapphire, sardius there,
And topaz, each with different light,
And amethyst, and many a gem
Shone in the new Jerusalem.

Its gates were twelve, of lustre white,
A single pearl was every gate;
Its street was golden, crystal bright;
No temple rose in sculptured state;
For God Himself, the great I AM,
Is all its temple, and the Lamb.

Its light was not the summer sun,
The waning moon, the starry sky;
The glory of Jehovah shone
And streamed through its transparency;
His presence made eternal day,
The Lamb enlightened it for aye.

The nations of the ransomed earth
Shall walk in its transcendent light;
And kings shall bring to it their worth,
The tribute of their treasures bright;
Its gates, for ever open wide,
Shall welcome the rejoicing tide.

No falling night or fleeting shade
Shall o'er its beauty ever come;
Nought that defiles or could degrade
Shall enter that celestial home;
But those who, like the Lamb's true wife,
Are written in the book of life.

He showed me then a river clear,
Untroubled by a warring wave;
As crystal did its depths appear,
A living flood whose waters lave
The city, flowing from the throne
Of God and of the Lamb alone.

And by its bank on either side
The wondrous tree of life did grow,
All central in the city wide,
And yielded fruit on every bough;
And every month its branches bore
Of fruit a different sort and store.

And of the tree of life the leaves
Were for the healing of mankind;
And not a sin or curse which grieves
The earth shall then remain behind:
For there the throne of the I AM
Shall ever be, and of the Lamb.

And Him in love and liberty
They then shall serve, and see His face;
His name upon their brows shall be
In living characters of grace;
His presence there shall banish night;
And they shall reign in endless light.

- H. Grattan Guinness in "Light for the Last Days" (written in 1886)

Entered Into Rest

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