

## EFFECT OF PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT TODAY UPON OUR DAILY LIVES

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"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Peter 3:10, 11.)

The expression, "the day of the Lord," used in this text refers to Christ's day--his second presence. The text describes the beginning or the first part of Christ's presence. How long is the day of the Lord? The Apostle Peter in V. 8 of this same chapter says, "But, beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The word millennium means a thousand. V. 10 tells us that the millennium "will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the element shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Only in the first part of the millennium is there a great "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1) After the great time of trouble is stopped by "the elect" (Matt. 24:22), righteousness will begin to prevail and gradually evil and evil doers will be cut off. Throughout the millennium it will not be completely light nor dark. It is only at evening time that it shall be light. (Zech. 14:6, 7) The millennium is an age of perfecting; it is an age of bringing mankind as well as the earth itself to perfection.

In the first part of the millennium the old order is destroyed. This makes room for the new order--the "new heavens" and the "new earth". The prophet Daniel (12:1) says that the great time of trouble would come after Michael (Christ) stands up. Thus Daniel, Peter and others remind us that Christ would be present in the earth (not as a human being, but as a glorious divine spirit being) during the great time of trouble. The trouble comes as a result of man's sin and selfishness during the past 6,000 years. Satan the "god" of the second world has kept the people in ignorance and blindness. Since our Lord has entered the strong man's house (Mark 3:27), the adversary has been making a desperate attempt to hold on to his usurped position as "god" of the second dispensation. The great time of trouble has resulted. Our Lord in describing this time said, as recorded in Matt. 24:43, "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

Returning to our text let us note that when Peter wrote these words, the day of the Lord or millennium was still future (over 1800 years in the future). Since Christ returned in 1874

we are in his day; and hence the millennium has begun. V. 10 might be read as follows: But the millennium has come as a thief in the night in the which the heavens are passing away with a great noise, and the elements are melting with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, are being burned up.

Not only did our Lord. (Matt. 24:43) describe the beginning of his second presence as thief like, but Peter (2 Pet. 3:10) also does the same. The Apostle Paul is in complete harmony with this thought. He says (1 Thess. 5:1-4), "But of the times and the seasons brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." Here Paul associate the great time of trouble with the thief-like presence of our Lord. The trouble is described as coming in spasms. War, revolution, and anarchy seem to be the pattern with periods of easement in between. At the present time the world is facing anarchy.

The four angels are "holding the four winds of the earth" until "the servants of our God" have been "sealed" "in their foreheads." (Rev. 7:1, 3) The scriptures seem to teach that the "little flock" will escape the severest feature of the trouble (anarchy). When the last member passes beyond the veil, anarchy will spread very quickly throughout the world. The great company class (Rev. 7) will then be made manifest and will go through the first part of this great tribulation. This will enable them to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These along with those of the great company tested down through the Gospel age will be born of the spirit --resurrected as perfect spirit beings. The last part of this trouble will be a trouble upon the nation of Israel called "Jacob's trouble." "But he will be saved out of it." (Jer. 30:7) Yes, God through the Christ (Matt. 24:11) will fight for Israel as he did in the days of old. This marvelous deliverance will remove the "blindness in part" that has come upon Israel. Rom. 11:25.

Returning again to our text we note that Peter uses symbolic language. The "heavens" describe the ecclesiastical arrangement and the "earth" the social order during the second dispensation under the blinding influence of Satan. The "elements" represent the various denominations of Christendom. It is a fact that today these various elements are passing away with a great noise. The social, political, financial, economic and military "works" in the earth with their pride, aristocracy and rank are being burned up. Never before in the history of man has there been such a clamoring for real and fancied rights. The hidden things of darkness are being brought to light such as never before. In this struggle, the

weak are saying "I am strong." Everywhere it is evident that the old social order is on fire and soon it will be burned up.

The first "heavens" and "earth" passed away at the time of the flood. The second "heavens" and "earth" are now passing away. The new heavens (the spiritual phase of Christ's kingdom) is now gradually coming down from God out of heaven (Rev. 21:1, 2; 2 Pet. 3:13; 2 Cor. 12:2). The first resurrection is in progress. The dead in Christ who slept down through the Gospel age no longer sleep but have been resurrected. The feet members as they finish their earthly course in death faithfully are being "changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye". (1 Thess. 4:15-18; 1 Cor. 15: 51, 52) Soon the "new heavens" will have fully come down to earth and as a consequence the "new earth" (the earthly phase of the kingdom) will be established. This kingdom will grow and grow until it fills the whole earth.

After the resurrection of the church of the firstborn (the "little flock" and the great company), the ancient worthies will experience a "better resurrection". It is better than the world's resurrection because they will come forth perfect whereas the world of mankind will be awakened with the same character they had when they died. They will have to retrace their steps, accept Christ, and obey the laws of the kingdom. If they do so, they will gain human perfection. By the close of the resurrection age (the millennium) the prayer "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10) will be answered. That will be at the evening time of the Millennial age. Then the kingdom will be turned over to God so that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28). God in turn turns the earthly kingdom over to restored mankind after the final testing and thus each man will become a king over the earth.

Returning to events occurring during the first part of the millennium, we note that in addition to the passing away of the ecclesiastical "heavens" and the burning of the social "earth", other prophecies are being fulfilled. The wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation, famines, pestilences, earthquakes (and we might add tornadoes, cyclones, hurricanes, etc.) which have occurred down through the Gospel age have, it seems, been intensified in this our day. (See Matt. 24:6, 7)

Our Lord gave a "parable of the fig tree" as a sign of his second presence. Israel is now (since 1948) a nation among nations. Even though her enemies would like to drive her into the sea, she is there to stay. The "meat in due season" served by our Lord through that "faithful and wise servant" is another indication of fulfilled prophecy. (Matt. 24:45-47) The harvest of the Gospel age has been in progress nearly 100 years. Soon the separation of the wheat from the tares and the ripe wheat from the unripe wheat will be complete.

Seeing that these many prophecies as well as other recorded in the scriptures are being fulfilled, what effect does this have today on our daily lives? What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conduct and godliness? Have these fulfilled prophecies increased our faith? Faith is very important and necessary at this time. It is necessary if we are to please God. (Heb. 11:6) "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin (which seems to be the sin of unbelief) which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." (Heb. 12:1) It is necessary to stay awake and especially so as we see the millennium drawing on. "Let us not sleep, as do other; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." It is necessary not only to watch the signs of the time, but also our conduct--our thoughts, words, and deeds. An endeavor to be as wise as serpents but harmless as doves will bring a blessing.

Peter exhorts us to endeavor to become more God-like (godliness). In 2 Pet. 1:4-12 he says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth."

Paul in 1 Tim. 6:6-8 says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." What an admonition to endeavor to put into practice! Men enjoy many favors and blessings today, yet dissatisfaction is widespread. Solomon almost knew nothing about the conveniences and comforts that many have. Because of selfishness, however, the people are unhappy and discontented. The saints should take no part in this struggle. Their consecration now was to run for the higher, the heavenly prize. These have contentment with their godliness. Their ambition is turned heavenward; they

are laying up treasure in heaven. They can joyfully sing: "Content whatever lot I see,  
Since 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

Those instructed by God's word do not feel the same anxiety and hopeless dread that is overspreading the world. These recognize the trouble as a necessary preparation for the individual blessing of the world in due time. The saints are to be hopeful, cheerful, and always rejoicing in view of the glorious outcome promised. If any of God's children have fallen into the discontent prevalent in the world, it is because they have left the Lord's footsteps and are seeking earthly treasures whether attaining them or not. These are urged to strive for the higher riches and the peace they afford. Saints with contentment are living examples, teaching valuable lessons to the world. These also have the privilege of actually preaching the incoming kingdom message to the groaning creation on various occasions. They can point out the real cause of present troubles and the only remedy.

By probing and inflaming either real or fancied wrongs, we do injury to those we should be helping and blessing. We spread their discontent and hence their trouble. Our mission is to preach the ransom given for all (1 Tim. 2:3-6) and the consequent blessings to come to all. It is written in Isa. 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains (kingdoms) are the feet of him (the last members of the body of Christ) that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

The sympathy of the Lord's children must be largely with the groaning creation striving for any deliverance from bondage. They should, however, sympathize with those of the opposing classes whose desires are to be just and generous but whose efforts are beset and hindered by weaknesses of their fallen nature, surroundings in life, etc. The Lord's people should have no sympathy with the arrogant, insatiate desires and endeavors of any class. Our utterances should be calm, moderate, and always for peace where principle is not at stake. As far as politics or social questions are concerned, we have no real solution other than that predicted in God's Word.

May we develop the fruit of the spirit! To have the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22, 23) developed and ripened is necessary to being an overcomer. To win the prize of the high calling, we must, after reaching the mark of perfect love, press down upon the mark. Since the millennium (the day of the Lord) has come as a thief in the night, in the which the ecclesiastical arrangements and the social order are passing away and being burned up, may the admonitions of Peter to watch our conduct and become more God-like inspire us to faithfulness.

