

"THE MORNING COMETH AND ALSO THE NIGHT"

(Hymn 317, Close Hymn 316)

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We read from the prophet Isaiah Chapter 21:11, 12, ". . . Watchman what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night. . ."

The whole period of time from man's fall until the beginning of the "times of restitution of all things" is symbolically described in the Bible as a nighttime of darkness, a darkness which would be dispelled only by the rising of the "Sun of Righteousness"--a pictorial description of the second presence and the work of The Christ. It is in keeping with this thought that the Psalmist wrote, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

For many years Bible Students have maintained that chronologically the morning of the Lord's day of blessing was due to begin in the year 1874, and thousands who have been blessed with this understanding of the prophecies have experienced rich blessings and received much encouragement by watching world developments with the object of discerning evidences of the passing away of this present order of things in preparation for God's new world of tomorrow. These have known that the blessings of the new day of Christ's kingdom will not come through any man-made institution or government, hence that these must be removed before the kingdom of Christ can be fully manifested. To those not well acquainted with the prophecies, it might sound strange to assert that the new day began as far back as 1874, especially so in view of the fact that the world's greatest periods of suffering have occurred since that time, and that even now there is less prospect for peace and security than ever before.

A thought given in our text explains this seeming paradox, for in answer to the question, "What of the night?" the watchman replies, "The morning cometh, and also the night." A Swedish translation of this text as given on reprint page 3531 says that although the morning has come, it is still dark. The new day of which the prophecies speak is called the "day of the Lord," and it is prophetically described by Joel 2:2 as being "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, As the morning spread upon the mountains. Morning--Millennial morning. We are not to suppose by this that the day of the Lord will never become light. The thought is that the morning hours of this day are dark and gloomy, and that not until later in the day would the light become discernible to all, with the full glory of the day of the Lord will not come until its close--we read in Zech. 14:6, 7, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor

dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light (evening time is the close of the Millennial Day).

Properly, the Lord's people living in these early morning hours of the new day are interested, and should always be on the alert to discern the fulfillment of the prophecies which apply now. And from their increasing understanding of the significance of events, be strengthened to press on in the narrow way of sacrifice that they might prove worthy to live and reign with Christ when his kingdom is fully established and manifested. Peter speaking of our having a "sure word of prophecy unto which we do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn." And even though we believe the day has dawned, since it is still dark, as the prophecies said it would be, we continue to need the sure word of prophecy to guide us--to identify for us the many signs of the morning.

The World Destroyed in the Morning: One might naturally ask, Why should it continue to be so dark after the morning has come? The answer to this question is that the "sure word of prophecy" locates the overthrow of the "present evil world" within the day of the Lord, and it is this work of destruction which inevitably involves trouble and distress for peoples and nations, that causes the darkness to continue. This is the thought of our text, "The Morning cometh"--of that there is no doubt--"and also the night"--the dark night of distress described by Daniel as "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1)

It is apparent, then, that the general outline of world events as given us in the prophecies pertaining to the day of the Lord is strikingly true of the period from 1874 until now. Within that time there have developed the conditions which led up to and precipitated two global wars. These, and associated events, have been world-shaking in their impact upon what men have called civilization, furnishing clear evidence that "the present evil world" is indeed coming to an end. In addition to this very general outline of prophetic development, the Scriptures furnish a number of faith strengthening details which, when we discern them as a part of the prophetic pattern which has taken shape during this "night also" period, should serve to guide us into still further understanding of the prophecies. And it is important, it seems to us, to discern this general pattern of events in order properly to identify and know the meaning of the various details of world developments.

Increase of Knowledge: One of the clearly established prophetic truths concerning the great "time of trouble" by which the present world order is destroyed is that it is precipitated by a world-wide increase of knowledge (Dan. 12:1,4). Jesus described it as

the "astrape" or bright-shining that would come out of the east and shine even unto the west (Matt. 24:27). Paul spoke of it as the epiphania, the revealing brightness of Christ's parousia, or second presence-- 2 Thess. 2:8.

It is well to remember in this connection that throughout the prophecies, the thought is emphasized that the Lord himself is responsible for the destruction of Satan's world. It was therefore by his providence that the foretold increase of knowledge has come in these "last days." This knowledge has helped to unmask superstition and to reveal to the people their long-denied rights. Because of this, the whole world is astir today, clamoring more and more insistently for the bounties of earth which have so long been denied them. It is largely through the increase of knowledge--which has been by divine appointment--that the Lord brings about the end of the world. A good illustration of this is the case of Gideon and his little band of warriors. God gave him a signal victory over the Medianites, but the way it was actually done was by confusing them so that they fought against one another. So it is in the "time of trouble." The increase of knowledge arouses the world to action, but there is no agreement as to methods and objectives, so one group fights against another. A former president of the United States Chamber of Commerce said "the battleground for the world today is at the worker level. We are up against the task of adjusting our foreign policy to deal with a world of swirling masses, a world seething with new ideas."

Spasms of Trouble: Another prominent outline in the general pattern of prophetic events pertaining to these "last days" is the spasmodic nature of the trouble. "Sudden destruction cometh upon them," writes Paul, "as travail upon a woman with child" (1 Thess. 5:3). Isaiah quotes the Lord as saying, (Isa. 42:14) "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once." "Sudden destruction" then obviously does not mean the overthrow of an order of things within a few days, or weeks, or even years. When we read that a short work will the Lord make on the earth, we should interpret the thought in keeping with the 6,000 years of the reign of sin and death and with our knowledge that an entire thousand years has been set aside in the divine plan for the destruction of all the enemies of God and enemies of righteousness. The Psalmist David says (Psalm 90:4), "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." Yes, a thousand years is a very short time in God's sight. It should not be thought incredible if even as much as 100 years or 150 years of the total period should be devoted to the complete overthrow of the kingdoms of this world.

The "short work" to some brethren seems like a long time and they begin to question as to whether the seventh thousand year day began in 1874. Let us not for a moment doubt this,

because all prophetic evidences support the chronology that was given to us by that wise and faithful servant. The short work of destruction comes in spasms, separated by periods of easement, which become shorter as the climax of the trouble nears with the multiplicity of pains increasing and spreading over a larger area and all these little pains contributing to the greatest pain just at birth of the child. When we look at the prophetic pattern it is not difficult to discern that one of these spasms struck the world in 1914. This was to be expected, for it was then that the "times of the Gentiles," that prophetic period of 2,520 years during which a certain group of Gentile nations was given authority to reign, came to an end. That spasm of trouble--the first World War--was the beginning of the shattering blows calculated to dispossess the "kingdoms of this world." This was followed by an economic spasm--that great depression of 1929.

The next military spasm of trouble struck after a period of easement. It was more destructive than the first, and more widespread. It left the world wounded and bleeding and starving, then there was easement. Since then the pain has spread to cover larger areas of trouble spots, covering other continents besides Europe and Asia, like Africa and South America.

Out of the North: Another design in the general pattern of events associated with the prophetic end of the world seems clearly outlined by a number of prophecies which speak of trouble coming out of the "north." Bible Students have long understood that the final phase of the great time of trouble, often spoken of as "Jacob's trouble," will be brought about by mighty forces out of the North which will come against restored Israel in Palestine. (Ezek. 38:15, 16, Jer. 30:7) In giving Jeremiah a picture of the time of trouble, the Lord asked the prophet what he saw, and he replied, "I see a seething pot from the face of the north." (Jer. 1:13) In a very comprehensive prophecy describing the destruction of "Babylon" recorded in the 50th and 51st chapters of Jeremiah, it is clearly stated that the army which comes against her is from the "North." Jer. 50:3.

In considering Ezekiel's prophecy telling of the forces which are to come against restored Israel, the general understanding has been that Russia is primarily the land of the north to which the prophet refers--although other nations are also involved. It is a matter of record which we should not overlook in our study of prophecy that both major military spasms of trouble which have come upon the world originated in the "north" in the sense that Russia and bordering nations were decisively involved in both instances. And no one can deny that the "north" is inescapably involved in the cataclysm now threatening the world.

From Nation to Nation: Another outline in the prophetic pattern of the "time of trouble" is given us in the prophecy of Jer. 25:32, which describes a nation to nation spread of the

“evil” that comes upon the world. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.” Neither global war was world-wide to start with. They became global struggles by spreading from one nation to another until, as he says in V. 33, “the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.” In the second war particularly, it is doubtful if any nation escaped the effects, and practically all of them suffered great loss of life. In the devastated cities of Europe and elsewhere, millions were slain and left to rot under the rubble by which they were buried. And the final spasm of trouble, Jacob's trouble will doubtless be even more destructive of life, causing a more literal fulfillment of this prophecy than is possible now to imagine. Jesus said in Matt. 24:22, “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.”

The work of destroying this social order is far from complete, but if we keep in mind that it is being accomplished in “spasms” with each seizure becoming world-wide through a nation-to-nation spread, it will help us to understand the meaning of events as they develop.

Another general factor in this time of trouble--one which is indicated in the prophecies--is that it would involve a struggle between the masses and the classes, between Capital and Labor, the “haves” and the “have nots.” But it is well to remember that few of the terms which we use today in connection with this phase of world controversy are used in the Bible. The terms “strikes, lockouts, labor unions, socialism, communism, fascism,” and the many others which are associated with this great struggle are not found in the Bible. When we speak of national or world revolution, while very descriptive of certain aspects of a dying world, the word itself is not a Bible term. The Bible uses words like, whirlwind, roaring waves, the sea, earthquakes to depict revolution or the restless conditions in the world. We mention this in order to avoid becoming too dogmatic as to the exact manner in which the prophecies are being and will continue to be fulfilled. If, for example, we decide that one phase of the great time of trouble consists of a world revolution--which is undoubtedly true--and then limit our understanding of the term revolution to a dictionary definition of the word, as it was used, a hundred or two hundred years ago, we might well be looking for the wrong thing to occur, and sooner or later lose our faith in the outworking of the divine plan.

We are convinced that Bro. Russell's general preview of the time of trouble as being in three stages or spasms, which he spoke of as war, revolution and anarchy was correct. But this was merely a general description of a disintegrating world ending finally in general

chaos. The first World War was undoubtedly the beginning of the breakdown of a world order. Before that war was over the conditions largely responsible for the second began to take shape. There was a communist revolution in Russia--the "north". It was only in one country, but the rest of the world was quick to notice its significance. The Allies of that time sent an army in an attempt to quell it, but failed. Many of the major diplomatic moves from that day until the outbreak of the second war were influenced by a vain attempt to keep that revolution within Russia. The nations which finally went to war against Germany had helped that country to arm, with the thought that she would stand as a bulwark against them and communist Russia. David's prophecy concerning the overthrow of the kingdoms of this world, speaking of the efforts of the "kings" to maintain the status quo, says, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psa. 2:4) We wonder if the Lord hasn't laughed just a little on more than one occasion since 1914.

What we name the developments which led up to and precipitated the second war, and what we call the war itself, is unimportant. Writers, philosophers, historians, statesmen and politicians, call it a world revolution, meaning that changes were being, and continue to be, wrought in every government of the world, and that within and among all nations there are opposing ideologies which are overthrowing old standards and customs so that the social, political, and even the religious framework of nations and of the world are being changed. These changes are more universal and more complex than many of us expected they would be, but they are accomplishing effectively and thoroughly that which the prophecies foretold.

One by one, the vast European empires collapsed after World War II. Great Britain, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and the other large colonial powers had been weakened by their losses during the war. They no longer could hold their colonies by force. Furthermore, many Europeans had come to believe that it was morally wrong to rule other people against their will.

The most striking and rapid independence movement took place in Africa. In 1950 there were only four independent countries on the vast African continent. By mid-1965, Africa had 37 independent countries which had gained their independence through revolution. In Asia, independent governments were established after World War II in Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Vietnam. The Philippines were granted independence by the U. S. In the Middle East, the nations that became independent after World War II, included Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

On page 307 of "The Divine Plan of the Ages," the whole time of trouble is referred to as a revolution by which Satan's empire--this "present evil world"--is overthrown, and is replaced by the kingdom of the Lord. From this standpoint the whole period of the "time of trouble" is one of change tending toward disintegration of the old order. Thus far it has been just this way. The first World War struck a shattering blow which began revolutionary changes in governments, particularly in the old world. In some cases these changes have been made at the point of the sword, in others by peaceful methods, such as the ballot.

Prior to the first World War, Europe was controlled almost wholly by hereditary ruling houses--by houses, and czars, and kings. They claimed divine right to rule, and to a limited degree they were correct in this claim, for they came in under the Gentile lease of power. They were the remnants of that arrangement of which it was originally said, "The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom." (Dan. 2:37) Today these mighty ones who really shaped the policies of Europe are gone. Even the House of Savoy in Italy has been voted out of power. The King of Greece who for a while ruled by American dollars, was sent into exile. He had to flee his own country. There has been Labor governments in England which never existed before under the old rule. India is no longer a part of the British Empire. Look where we will throughout the world and it can be seen that change is the order of the day.

During the course of the first World War, Bro. Russell wrote in Reprints 5630, "We see the kings of this world now being dashed to pieces, and we are expecting to see the process continued until they are completely ground to powder. They shall become as the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and the wind shall carry them away. They shall be found no more at all--" -Dan. 2:34, 35. A moment's reflection reveals that Bro. Russell's expectation that the destruction of the old order, begun with the first World War, would continue, was well founded. For example, the admixture of iron and clay in the feet and toes of the image has long been understood to represent the church-state rulership of the old Roman world. This order of things, as represented in the toes of the image, still existed when Bro. Russell made his statement, but not now--at least not in those powerful states which formerly dictated the policies of Europe. Thus, while the work of destroying the "iron and clay" combine is not complete, it is well on its way. Some of the iron still exists, and also some of the clay, but the impact has separated them in most places, and the grinding to powder of the shattered pieces goes on apace.

While all man-made governments must eventually give place to the kingdom of Christ, this completed picture is not necessarily represented merely by the fall of Nebuchadnezzar's image. We read in Micah 4:1-3 that after the "mountain" of the Lord is established in "the

top of the mountains," the Lord will rebuke "strong nations afar off," indicating that there will be remnants of Gentile nations still existing. This may indicate that the increase of His government and peace," like the spasm of trouble which destroy Satan's world, will to some extent be or the basis of a nation-to-nation spread--not from the "north" but from Jerusalem.

If we think of the "time of trouble" and the establishment of Christ's kingdom as a transition from Satan's empire to the kingdom of the Lord, it will help us to understand the meaning of world events more clearly. For a period of 2520 years, beginning with 606 B.C., God granted a certain succession of Gentile governments a right to rule. Beginning with 1914, therefore, the ousting proceedings were due to begin. There is every evidence now that those proceedings did begin there. The order of things which was based upon the divine right of kings has just about ended. The nations through which it operated, still exists, although their governments have been changed, or else destroyed, as in Germany. These changes will continue, nationally and internationally. The grinding to powder of the fragments will merge into the "blowing away" phase until the world is fully prepared for the manifestation of Christ's kingdom. Eventually the new "stone" kingdom will become a great mountain to fill the whole earth.

The final phase of the trouble will be the attack on restored Israel in Palestine. This attack will originate in the "north" but Israel will be saved and her enemies defeated and destroyed. The Scriptures clearly indicate that it will be then that the people of Israel and the other nations will recognize the hand of divine intervention. From that point onward the kingdom of the Lord will spread its influence until all the families of the earth come under its blessed and righteous control.

"What (then) of the night?" What of the darkness that is upon the earth, even though the morning has dawned? Undoubtedly we are well on in the time of trouble. We have already passed through two military spasms of destruction, besides an economic spasm--the world-wide depression which began in 1930. The military spasms have originated in the "north" and have spread. Meanwhile the nations have been gathering and continue to form alliances, as the prophecies indicate they would. Nevertheless, let us not conclude that the prophetic picture of the destruction of a world has been completely fulfilled. In all probability the worst is yet to come. The great climax of Armageddon is still future. The thought we are trying to impress is that the world has begun to come to an end, that the work of destruction began exactly on time, in 1914, when the Gentile Times ended. The ousting process began there, and the Lord has been using the nations to destroy one another. Now the stage is being set for a universal destruction, which will undoubtedly far exceed that of either of the former spasms of the "time of trouble."

May these facts, so clearly spread out before us on the daily chronicle of events increase our faith in God's promises, and in the near manifestation of his kingdom. May we realize as never before how transient are the things of this world, and how vitally important it is in the short time remaining to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. May we daily endeavor to be more faithful in carrying out the terms of our consecration, by growing in grace and by laying down our lives in divine service!