

BEHOLD

YOUR

KING

A DAWN PUBLICATION

"BEHOLD YOUR KING!"

A HERALD
OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

Dedicated to the King of kings and Lord of lords
in the interest of his consecrated followers
and of all who are seeking a better understanding
of the manner in which God's
hand is now being manifested in
the affairs of men.

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PREFACE

"The soul of modern man is sick unto death. Political hatred, religious intolerance, racial discrimination, and nationalistic prejudice infect it with devastating spiritual disease."-CHRISTIAN CENTURY

The foregoing statement is a commendably frank acknowledgment of a universal affliction to which a reluctant world can no longer shut its eyes.

One of the chief causes of this sickness of the human race is imperfect government. No issue confronting the world today is more important than that concerning the manner in which the nations are to be ruled. There are the extreme demands of all the various and conflicting theories of government, opposing ideologies, labor fronts, reactionary forces, political and religious fronts-to mention a few-yet all we have obtained from this babel of voices, and from the opposing efforts inspired by them, is chaos and fear. The purpose of "Behold Your King!" is to point out the prophetic and hope-inspiring meaning of these events which, unless viewed through the searchlight of God's Word, might well indicate that modern man is capable only of producing misery for himself today and of anticipating tomorrow with fear.

The author of "Behold Your King!" does not suggest a new solution to the world's problems but merely calls attention, candidly and fearlessly, to what the Bible says about the solution provided by the great Creator. The human race is not to be destroyed. Christianity will not be destroyed. The forces of atheism will not be triumphant.

But all the evils of the present world are doomed, some of which many may consider good, and not evil. However, every thoughtful, intelligent person should be prepared to face facts, and "Behold Your King!" is designed for such, presenting the truth without any theological twists or traditional misconceptions. Its purpose is not to destroy but to build-to build faith in the Word of God by calling attention to the accuracy with which its prophecies preview our day and, upon the basis of that faith, enable the reader to take courage from its promises concerning tomorrow.

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CHAPTER I

PORTRAIT OF THE KING

"Behold your King!"-John 19:14

THE kings have had their day, it is said, but there is a King whose day is shortly to begin. As his "day" draws near, the whole world is in a very sorry state of affairs, and there are many philosophers who are urging us to believe that there is no way out of the chaos that is everywhere apparent. Most of the world has concluded that government by kings is a failure. But now that most of the kings are gone, the people are no better satisfied with the governments which have succeeded them, while the world lies torn and bleeding as a result of a cruel struggle which continues between opposing ideologies. Is such a world willing to try another king?

We grant that the kings of the past have failed, and we freely acknowledge that the governments which have taken their places are quite unsatisfactory, for the hearts of the people are filled with fear as they consider the possibilities of what may yet befall them. But it is just such conditions as these which call for a new ruler.

Frequently one hears the opinion voiced that the only thing which will now save the world from utter ruin, and the race itself from destruction, is a high-principled superman, an unselfish one who would be wise enough to map out a new and better course for the people, order his plans put into effect, and have power to enforce his edicts. Convince the world that such a ruler is on hand, and he would probably be universally acclaimed!

But that is a large order, for such a king would of necessity have to break with tradition all along the line. He

would have to be a king capable of establishing his authority without the necessity of leading millions of the world's youth into battle. And he would not be different from the kings and rulers who have failed if he attempted to enforce his decrees under threat of destruction by nuclear bombs. He would need to be a king who would take as much interest in the poor as in the rich, and who would respect the rights of all races and colors equally.

A king qualified to take over in this chaotic world of today could not be an advocate of superraces. He would have to be a promoter of the interests of just one race—the human race. Because all people are members of this one race, he would need to be just as interested in the Hottentot of the jungles as in America's elite "four hundred."

And he would have to be a very wise king, else those who hold vested interests of one sort or another would trick him into believing that their claims were just and that the human race could not get along at all if their own selfish interests were not considered. He would have to possess the qualities which one of the prophets of the Bible ascribes to a foretold King whom God would cause to rule over the nations. Of this One we read:

"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."-Isa. 11:2-5

Not a single one of all the kings who have lived to this time-the kings who have had their day-ever possessed all these qualities. On the other hand, no king, no ruler, no government which possesses less in the way of knowledge, wisdom, justice, and power could hope to assume the rulership of the world today and bring peace and satisfaction to all the people. A king thus qualified to be a world ruler would fulfill still another prophetic picture, this one given to us by King David:

"Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor ■ his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."-Ps. 72:1-8

Nearly two thousand years ago a man journeyed up and down in the land of Judea whom his followers believed was destined to be the world ruler which the prophecies had foretold. He did not have an army. He never tried to exalt himself at the expense of others. He was noted for his kindness. He loved all and was sympathetic even toward the erring. One of the most revealing observations made concerning him states that he 'went about doing good.'

But the world was too evil to appreciate so noble a character. He was hated by the rulers of his day, and charges were brought against him aimed at his life. One of the charges was that he claimed to be a king. He was brought before a Roman governor for trial and was asked, "Art thou a king?" to which he replied, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." (John 18:37) In stating this, he knew that he was in effect sentencing himself

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to death because such a claim would be considered treason against Caesar.

This kindly, sympathetic, understanding, and self-sacrificing servant of the people was a Jew, and when the governor realized he could do nothing more to save his life, he permitted his soldiers to place a crown of thorns upon the prisoner's head, and, showing him to the people, he cried, "Behold your King!" But they shouted, "Crucify him, crucify him." -John 19:15

While this future King of earth voluntarily surrendered himself to his enemies, his manner of life and death nonetheless changed the course of the world. While this King was crucified by his people, the religion which bore his name was later made the official state religion of all Europe-contrary to his teachings. In his name some of the bloodiest wars of history were fought, but he himself was a peacemaker who taught his followers to love their enemies and to do good to those who spitefully used them. He taught that those who wield the sword would perish by the sword.-Matt. 26:52

And so it has been. The kings who now have had their day built up their kingdoms and tried to maintain them by the power of the sword; but they have all perished, and even the global use of swords has failed to solve the world's problems. Despite this, one of the principle things now being done to bring peace and goodwill on earth is the preparation for further war.

That is why the world needs a new king, one who will discard the principles and methods which have always failed and which will continue to fail; one whose ideology is that of goodwill among all and for all; one who is backed up by power other than that of the sword, even the power of the Creator himself; or.e who manifested such genuine and loving interest in his subjects that he gladly died for them, dying even the cruel death of the cross. Such a one is to be the world's new King. He is Jesus of Nazareth.

They crucified Jesus, but he told his disciples that he would come again, and he taught them to pray for the kingdom which he would establish following his return. Today, while the world is perishing because of its own misguided and selfishly inspired judgment, its one hope lies in the fulfillment of the promise made by King Jesus that he would come and, in coming, would do for the world what it could not do for itself. The brightness of the hope that radiates from this promise is in the fact that the day in which Jesus is to be King is 'very near. The last hours of this night of sin are dark an'd stormy, but the light of his presence and the power of his coming kingdom will soon become manifest, and the darkness of the night will give way to the brightness of the new day of peace and joy and life for all mankind.

CHAPTER II

"LOWER THAN THE ANGELS"

"For Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and honor."-Psalm 8:5

WHAT is the world coming to? Had the chaotic and distressing conditions of today prevailed a generation ago, many would have concluded that the second coming of Christ was near and that the world would soon come to an end. But a generation of modernist teachings in our institutions of learning, plus global wars and the ever-increasing worldliness and atheism of our day, have well-nigh erased all religious viewpoints from the minds of the general public. Hence, while millions today fear that the human race may ultimately be destroyed by nuclear energy or by pollution, they do not as a rule associate their fears with the troublous days foretold in the Bible.

True, many know the Bible teaches that Jesus would come again to this earth, but because of the distorted understanding of this teaching that has been handed down to us from the Dark Ages, it is now considered to be largely a superstitious notion, unworthy of the attention of the serious-minded and enlightened people of our day. It is because sincere but obviously misguided souls in the past donned white robes, mounted housetops, and looked for Jesus to drop out of the sky to take them away into the clouds, leaving the earth enveloped in a mass of flames, that the thinking public of today has concluded that the second coming of Christ is not to be considered seriously as offering a solution to the world's problems.

No one is to be blamed for turning away in unbelief from a grotesque theory of this kind. On the other hand,

human wisdom offers no hope of escape from the dilemma into which man's selfishness and foolishness have plunged the unhappy human race. The question therefore naturally arises, Is no solution to be found? The answer to that question is, Yes, the Bible itself, when viewed in the light of its own reasonable teachings, reveals that in this hour of darkness and great need the Creator of the universe intervenes by sending a divine representative to the earth to straighten out the tangled affairs of the people; and this One is Jesus.

In the light of the marvelous scientific achievements of our day, the visit to earth of One who ordinarily dwells in another part of the universe is not unthinkable, or even farfetched. Our space scientists have already sent men to the moon. When we contemplate this, we should remember that the Creator placed the moon where it is, controls its every movement by his unerring laws, and likewise has created and controls the countless other heavenly bodies, which are millions of light years farther removed from us than the moon. And how reasonable it is to believe that if man, with his very limited knowledge and powers, can visit not only the moon but possibly Mars and Venus as well, then surely the Creator, who made the universe, can easily send a representative to visit us if he purposes to do so!

We should have no difficulty in recognizing that the Creator of the universe is able to send someone to visit this planet; but the question properly arises, Are we justified in supposing that he gives that much consideration to such an infinitesimally small part of his universe as we know this Planet Earth to be? This question was raised in the minds of many of the world's wisest philosophers of the past. David, "the sweet singer of Israel," pondered over it and found the answer. He wrote: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him: and the Son of man, that thou visitest him?"-Ps. 8:3,4

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David, even without the aid of a telescope, discerned how insignificant this earth must be in comparison with the creative works of God, which were spread out before him night after night in all their glory and grandeur. And as for the human race which dwells on the earth, the Prophet Isaiah described the nations as mere "dust of the balance." (Isa. 40:15) No wonder David raised the question as to why God, through the prophets, had indicated his interest in human beings, an interest so deep and genuine that he had promised to send One to deliver the people from sin and death, One who would become a great King, to rule over and bless all nations.

But David gives us the answer to his own query, saying of man that God had created him only a little lower than the angels and had crowned him with glory and honor and had made him to have dominion over the earth and all things upon it. Ah yes, the Creator had constituted man a king, to have dominion and rule over this part of his universe. And now that this king of earth had disobeyed his law and been dethroned, God proposed to take steps to re-establish him as the ruler of the earth and restore to him all the glorious privileges of his lost dominion.

Man was made "a little lower than the angels." We do not know much about angels, except that the Bible assures us that they exist and that they are much more intelligent and powerful than man and in almost every way superior to him. Many are unable to believe in the existence of angels because, as they say, we cannot have faith in that which we do not see. What angels really are, what they look like, what their habits of life may be, and what useful part they play in the Creator's scheme of things, are points of minor importance with respect to our present discussion. It is important, however, to realize that such creatures do exist because the fact of their existence and the nature of their activities are closely related to God's interest in the human race and his purpose in sending a royal representative of heaven to visit us.

Is it, then, reasonable to suppose that man is not the highest order of being in all the Creator's vast universe? Even the asking of such a question seems foolish to those human minds which are not too overburdened with the weight of their own importance. Imagine, if you can, a human being—even a scientist—peering through a telescope into the vast universe of worlds which its powerful lenses bring within his mystified view, saying to himself, I am the most intelligent, the most powerful, and the most important of all beings that exist!

How unreasonable it would be for one to take such a view of things when he does not even know how the universe came into existence or fully understand the laws which govern the countless millions of heavenly bodies he can see through his telescope, laws which prevent their crashing into one another! He has no idea how far the universe extends beyond the range of his puny instruments. All he knows is that he was able to compound some of the elements of which the earth is made and put them together to form a telescope and then, by its use, to see a great deal more of the universe than is visible to the naked eye. Oh yes, he has discovered that every world in the universe moves at such a fixed rate of speed that he can calculate where it will be hundreds of years in advance, but he does not know why that speed never changes.

The scientist has learned that all matter is made up of atoms. He can even "split the atom." But he cannot make one. It is something like the nursery rhyme of the broken egg, which states that "all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again." But in spite of the fact that, stretched out before him, are millions of created things which he could not create and that there are forces and laws which he cannot fully explain, the unbelieving scientist and nonscientist alike continue to insist that they cannot believe in that which they do not see, maintaining that they themselves are of the

highest order of all living things in the universe. Such a state of mind is really pathetic when we ponder it, yet how few realize this.

The fact that so many things exist of which we have little or no understanding-either as to how they were created or the laws which govern them-should be ample proof that somewhere in this universe there exists intelligence and power vastly superior to our own. Should it not also be apparent that the Creator of the vast universe could, if he so decreed, send a visitor to this earth from one of the other planes of intelligent existence-a visitor powerful enough to exercise a tremendous influence in the affairs of men? The Bible assures us that God did so propose! It is to this that David refers when he speaks of man as being of sufficient importance in God's sight as to merit such a visit.

But why should God send a visitor to this earth? All the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning this visit, and the New Testament explanations of these prophecies, indicate that it is due to the fact that man became a rebel against divine law and that through sin and selfishness the human race would finally perish unless the Creator did something about it. So we read that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."-John 3:16

Jesus was the messenger from heaven-the One who came to save the rebellious race. He gave a wonderful parable to illustrate this, in which he likened the whole vast universe of God to a sheepfold in which there were a hundred sheep. One of these went astray, and the good shepherd sought and found the lost sheep, which well represented the human race. Jesus was the Good Shepherd who came to earth to rescue humanity from the wilderness of sin and death.

Yes, the human race is "lost." David said that man had been made a little lower than the angels, "crowned with glory and honor," and made ruler over everything of a lower nature upon the earth. This statement of David's is quoted in the New Testament, and the explanation is added: "But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, ... crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."-Heb. 2:8,9

How true that we see "not yet" all things put under man! He has long since proved his inability to rule himself, to say nothing of ruling over the dominion as a whole. While the Creator commissioned man to multiply and fill the earth and have dominion over it, man forfeited that dominion and the right to live forever when he transgressed the divine law. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" was the sentence pronounced upon man when he was driven out of Eden into the unfinished earth to die.-Gen. 3:19

It is well to note in this connection, however, that man was sentenced to death, and not to eternal torment, as the theology of the Dark Ages teaches. Nor is it true, since man sinned and is not permitted to continue to live on the earth, that God made a provision for him to be transferred at death to heaven. Man was made to live on the earth, "a little lower than the angels," and there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that it is God's purpose for human beings at death, or at any other time, to become angels.

Man was created perfect as a human and was made in the image of God, that is, able to reason and to know right from wrong. That was more than 6,000 years ago. But throughout all the years since then, the race has been degenerating, until today we are not able even to approximate

what a perfect man is like. We are all imperfect and dying, deformed in mind and body. Our intellects are dwarfed, our bodies diseased and decaying. The original perfection of both mind and body is lost, and selfishness is driving the race headlong toward destruction.

But the Creator did not lose interest in his human creatures when they disobeyed his law. He was still "mindful" of man and began to make promises to send a visitor to the earth from the heavenly courts-One who would be equipped and empowered to rescue him from the pit of sin and death into which he had fallen. This visitor was Jesus, and when he was born the angel announced, "Fear not, ... for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."-Luke 2:10, 11

"A Savior, which is Christ the Lord"-how full of meaning are those words! Truly the world needed to be saved; and the world is still waiting for that salvation-a salvation which God had promised would reach the people through the Christ whom he would send. This promised One was to be born into the world as a "Seed" through whom "all the families of the earth" were to be blessed. He was to be the great Lifegiver of the race and the Mediator between God and men. He was to be "the Prince of Peace." He was to be a mighty King to rule over all nations. (Isa. 9:6, 7; Zech. 14:9) Truly he was to be a Savior, and a great one; and it was the happy privilege of the angels on that first holy night to announce to the Shepherds on the Judean hills that this long-promised One was born; that he had come.

And from whence did this holy Child ,come,? The Scriptures are explicit on this point. In the first chapter of the Gospel according to John we learn that Jesus had a pre-human existence, that from the very beginning of creation he was the "Word," or spokesman, of the Creator, participating in all the works of creation. This great One, the

apostle explains, was "made flesh" and dwelt among us. Here, then, was the first phase of the foretold "visit" to earth of a heavenly messenger representing the Creator and manifesting the Creator's interest in the welfare of his fallen human creatures.

And why did this highly exalted messenger from heaven visit the earth in such humble form and under circumstances so lacking in splendor and glory? The apostle answers, saying that Jesus was made flesh "for the suffering of death." (Heb. 2:9) As man was "a little lower than the angels," so Jesus partook of the same nature, that he might be the exact correspondence of the perfect Adam. Yes, Jesus was made flesh for the suffering of death, not to be a human king over the nations; for the main purpose of his first visit was accomplished when he tasted death "for every man." Jesus said to his disciples that he would give his flesh for the life of the world, and this he did, voluntarily and gladly, upon Calvary's cross.-John 6:51

It was the death of the man Christ Jesus that opened the way for the resotation of the lost inheritance of life and rulership. This is what the apostle meant when he wrote: "We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, ... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:8, 9) We see, then, that an important step toward the restoration to result from the promised visit to earth has been accomplished. However, man is still fallen. He continues to die. He is still ruled by sin and selfishness and makes war upon his fellows. Now, indeed, the ingenious ones among the human race are producing instruments of destruction which threaten the very existence of the human race.

Nevertheless, the first phase of the promised visit to earth by which God indicated he would intervene on be-

half of the people to save them from eternal death is now an accomplished fact. We see that man is still dying, but we see also that Jesus has come and died for man; and in this we recognize the beginning of the outworking of the divine plan to save the people from death and restore them to life and happiness as the kings of earth, again crowned with the glory and honor of the human nature, only a little lower than the angels.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERVENING AGE

"Go ye, and teach all nations."-Matthew 28:19

THE apostle explains that Jesus was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (I Pet. 3:18) Having given his flesh for the life of the world, he was now exalted again above the human plane. As a man, Jesus was a little lower than the angels; but in his resurrection, as the apostle declares, he was made "better" than the angels. (Heb. 1:4) Indeed, the apostle writes that Jesus was exalted far above angels, principalities, and powers, and every name which is named, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God-the throne from which the whole universe is ruled.-Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:5-11

We honor our heroes and reward those who risk death in order to save or benefit others. There is a righteous principle involved in this-a principle which had its origin with the Creator. He thus honored Jesus for his faithfulness. He "decorated" his Son with glory and immortality. He exalted him above the angels, and above every name that is named. Jehovah, whose wisdom and power operated to create the universe, now used his power to raise Jesus from the dead and gave him a nature "which was above the human and above the angelic-the divine nature itself.

Mere man, by discovering and harnessing the energy in the atom, has made racial suicide possible. God, who created that energy, and therefore is vastly superior to it, laid hold upon the dead Christ, restored him to life, and exalted him to his own right hand, giving him "all power in heaven and in earth."-Matt. 28:18

We are awe-inspired with the thought! Is it any wonder that divine intervention such as this on behalf of One who, while he died for the sins of the world, nevertheless was unjustly killed, should have such a profound effect on the course of the world? If the discovery of the use of nuclear energy has ushered the world into a new age, is it any wonder that the direct use of divine power by Him who created nuclear energy should also mark the beginning of a new age, even the Christian Age?

But we should not labor under any misapprehensions concerning the Christian Age. During this age many things have occurred in the name of Christianity which have not been Christian. It has not been Christian for one nation to go to war against another in the name of Christ. The wars of the Crusades were un-Christian. The so-called "Holy" Inquisition was unholy, the product of inhuman religious intolerance and hate, and among the most un-Christian of all the diabolical practices of the Dark Ages. Persecution of the Jews has not been Christian.

The fear-instilling teaching of eternal torture for the wicked is not Christian. Masses for the dead, and the claim that such masses ease and shorten the suffering of those alleged to have gone to purgatory, are wholly without authority by Christ or any of the inspired writers of the Scriptures. Selling indulgences, blessing images, etc., in consideration of a fee, are un-Christian and unholy practices and no part of God's work during the Christian Age.

That for which the now nearly obsolete word "Christendom" stood was not Christian. This term had its inception in the claim that the church-state governments of Europe constituted the kingdom of Christ, but that was a false claim. This union of apostate churches with civil governments was foretold in the Scriptures and portrayed as spiritual harlotry. The teachings of the Bible relative to this illicit union of the church with the state are symbolized by a

dissolute woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast who made all the people drunk with "the wine of her fornication." No wonder the nations of Europe were almost continuously engaging in a carousal of war, bloodshed, and hate during the heyday of ecclesiastical power in the Old Roman world. Surely such debauchery was not Christian and was no part of God's plan for the Christian Age.

All these evils are but the work of selfish man. That they were practiced in the name of Christ has confused the true issues and principles of Christianity in the minds of millions, and it is this confusion that is now causing so many to lose faith in the Bible. The enlightenment of our day is causing those with thinking minds to realize that a religion which countenances and promotes such evils is a very bad religion and that the world would be better off without it.

We agree with this but at the same time bid the earnest truth-seeker to look further, to search deeper, to push aside the rubbish of superstition and discover the bright and genui'ne jewels of truth hidden in the Bible-truths which in the light of present-day events reflect beams of light from the God of heaven, which pierce the gloom ahead and reveal the remaining steps in the pathway to peace and everlasting life which God has outlined in his Word.

What, then, **has** been the work of God since Jesus went away? To the limited extent that the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus have been practiced, we have had a better world-of this there can be no doubt. On the other hand, the fact that nations and individuals comprising nations have not always practiced Christian principles in their dealings with one another does not mean that Christianity itself has failed; for strange though this may seem, Jesus did not commission his followers during this age to convert the world to his way of life. To the extent that the influence of his teachings in the lives of his true

followers has made the world better, it has thus far been but a by-product of true Christian work.

Jesus commissioned his followers to go into all the world to preach the Gospel and to make disciples of all nations. It was not expected that every individual in all nations would become a disciple. As for the world at large who heard the message, it was to be merely in the nature of a witness, a testimony. (Matt. 24:14) Instead of all being converted by this effort, the Scriptures explain that its purpose has been merely to "take out" of the world "a people for his name."-Acts 15:14

A great deal is said in the New Testament about the "calling" of this class. The promise is given that if they suffer and die with Jesus they will live and reign with him. They are to share his "glory." They are to sit on his throne. (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11, 12; Rev. 3:21) Jesus promised to prepare a place for them and to "come again" and receive them unto himself. (John 14:1-3) All of these amazing promises indicate that the true disciples of Christ during this Christian Age. are justified in expecting to be exalted above angels, to share the divine nature and glory which the Father gave to Jesus as the reward for his faithfulness. The apostle speaks of it as a "heavenly calling."-11 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 3:1

The calling and the selection of these joint-heirs of Christ, based upon their acceptance of and loyalty to the Gospel, have been the divine program for this age. This program began at Pentecost. There the invisible power of God, the Holy Spirit; came upon the waiting disciples, enlightening their minds and giving them power of speech to declare the message of truth concerning the purposes of God. The response to the Gospel on that first day was tremendous, but the enthusiasm of the believers was commingled with persecution by the intolerant and prejudiced. A great fight between light and darkness was there re-

newed, and the struggle has continued even until now. The truth and those who have believed it have always appeared to be on the losing side.

It was thus with Jesus who, although he was the light of the world, was crucified. He told his disciples that they also were to be "the light of the world"; but their light, although they have let it shine as brightly as possible, has been but a glimmer in the world of darkness and sin. The light-bearers have been ostracized, persecuted, and killed. Jesus foretold this, saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Jesus' true followers have also overcome the world, not by conquering and ruling over it through the civil powers, but by overcoming its spirit of selfishness in their hearts and, like Jesus, laying down their lives in sacrifice that others might be blessed.

It may have appeared that the truth and the truth people have always been on the scaffold. But it hasn't really been a scaffold. It has been an altar-God's altar of sacrifice. His people have, like Jesus, been proving their love for his ways and principles by faithfulness in sacrificing. They have been demonstrating their unselfishness, their devotion to righteousness, and their harmony with the divine principles of justice and love. They have loved their enemies as God loves his. In these ways they have qualified to be associated with the highly exalted Jesus in the future work of restoring humanity to life upon the earth.

It is the calling out of the world and the testing of these that has been God's work during the Christian Age. In it we see a further manifestation of divine wisdom and mercy. Paul speaks of Christians as "workers together" with God. (II Cor. 6:1) Surely the Creator, with all his resources of wisdom and power, does not need the limited aid that can be given to him by puny and dying human beings. But he has arranged it that way, and there must be a reason

for it. One of the terms applied to Jesus in his relationship to God and men is that of Mediator, that is, one who stands between to effect reconciliation. (II Cor. 5:18) They, as representatives of the human race, are to be on the future mediatorial board with Jesus and will share with him in the work of reconciling the estranged world to God.

Marvelous grace!

These promises relating to the "high calling" of Jesus' disciples have been misunderstood. From them the false theory has been deduced that the Creator desires that as many humans as possible be transferred to heaven; that he never intended man to remain a human; that his human existence is but the first stage of life, and death but a portal into the next phase, which is to be spiritual, or heavenly. The theory is that all who accept Christ as their Savior before they reach the portal of death go to heaven and that all others go to purgatory or to hell and there suffer excruciating tortures. It has also been supposed that the work of Christians during this present age has been to convert as many humans as possible in order to rescue them from this terrible fate of eternal torture in hell, which otherwise would be sure to overtake them at death.

Due to this misunderstanding, the real destiny of the human race has been overlooked. Few have noticed the many promises of God to restore the dead to life as humans, that they might live on the earth forever. They have failed to realize that the promises of God which speak of spiritual blessings and a heavenly home and of glory, honor, and immortality are intended only for the footstep followers of Jesus-given to encourage them to faithfulness in laying down their lives as Jesus did, that they might live and reign with him in his future mediatorial kingdom here on this earth. The casual reader of the Bible has failed thus to see that the divine program in selecting the church of Christ during the present age is that the church

in heavenly glory, exalted high above angels and principalities and powers, should, together with Christ, be the channel of life-giving blessings to all mankind.

The work of God during the present age began auspiciously at Pentecost. That work has continued largely unnoticed and unknown to the world. Its implications have been so far-reaching, and its magnitude so great, that there is little wonder it should be misunderstood and misrepresented. Through misrepresentation, spurious works have been undertaken and a counterfeit kingdom of Christ established. Meanwhile, the whole human creation of God has groaned and travailed together in sin and pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; that is, waiting, although unknowingly, for the work of this age to be completed, when all those called to be sons of God and joint-heirs with Jesus shall be exalted *above* the angels, to live and reign with him in the kingdom of blessing now near.-Rom. 8:22, 19

CHAPTER IV

"IN LIKE MANNER"

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven; shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."-Acts 1:11

MORE than thirty-three years had passed since an angel, addressing a group of shepherds on the hills of Judea, had announced the birth of Jesus and proclaimed him to be the Savior of the world. This One whose coming had been foretold by the prophets and whom they described as a King who would rule over and bring peace to all nations was accepted by a few of his day as the foretold Messiah and Prince of Peace. His disciples were convinced that God was with him, for had they not witnessed his miracles? He had healed the sick and raised the dead; yet after a very short period of activity in teaching truths concerning the kingdom of God and illustrating the blessings of that kingdom by the miracles he wrought, Jesus was arrested by his enemies and put to death.

Countless numbers of times in the history of humanity there have been miscarriages of justice due to the unwisdom and prejudice of those whose business it is to judge and punish violators of the law. In most cases these unfortunate experiences are little publicized and soon forgotten by all except the individuals directly concerned. But it was different in the case of the Man of Galilee, who was hung upon a cross until he died-not because he had violated any law of his day, but due to religious prejudice and intolerance. Here, indeed, was a gross miscarriage and

travesty of justice; but it was destined to mark the turning point of time and to introduce the most highly civilizing concepts of religion ever known to man. It was the beginning of the Christian era!

There were a few who did not lose faith in Jesus when the mob cried for his death. Among these was Mary Magdalene. She went to Jesus' tomb early in the morning after the sabbath and found it empty. She notified two of his disciples, Peter and John, who investigated and verified her story. They returned to their home, but Mary tarried at the tomb. Supposing that someone had stolen Jesus' body, heartbroken she peered once more into the empty tomb, as if hoping that her senses had belied her and that after all her dead Lord was really there. It was then that she saw two angels (who appeared as men). One was at the head and the other at the foot of the stone slab on which the body had lain.

Mary was weeping bitterly, and in answer to questions put to her by these strangers, she explained that the body of the Master had been taken away and that she knew not where to find it. Outside of the tomb another stranger accosted her, and he also wanted to know the cause of her sadness. Mary thought this man was the gardener; and, supposing that he had been in the general vicinity most of the time since Jesus died, she hoped that he could give her some information as to who had taken away the body and where it had been taken; so she asked him about it.

This stranger who appeared as a gardener did know what had become of Jesus' body, for he was the resurrected Jesus. With the tone of voice and accent with which she was familiar and which on many occasions, no doubt, had stirred her very soul, he now spoke to her, saying, "Mary." This stranger did not look like Jesus. He was not dressed as Jesus had always dressed. But what Mary heard was the voice of Jesus, and she knew then that he was no longer dead. Yes, Mary knew that she had seen Jesus. But she was

keenly aware also that now he was different. He suddenly disappeared from her sight; where he went she did not know.

Later he joined two of his disciples who were en route to Emmaus, and he conversed with them. They did not recognize him until he offered thanks at the evening meal. They did not know him from his appearance, but it was evidently the tone of his voice and his familiar way of expressing thanks that caused them to identify their guest as the Master.

On another occasion Jesus appeared in an upper room where his eleven apostles were conferring. The door was locked, but Jesus came into the room without opening it. This time he appeared in such a manner that they recognized him by sight.

Mary had seen a stranger. Two of the disciples had seen and conversed with a stranger. The eleven in the upper room saw the Master as he had formerly appeared. Later, a group of his disciples saw Jesus on the lakeshore and thought he was a fisherman. He was with his disciples for forty days following his resurrection, but they saw him only on a few brief occasions. Yes, he was different, so different that they were puzzled to understand him and to know just how they could continue to be his disciples!

When Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of the Creator, he announced to his disciples that all power had been given to him in heaven and in earth. (Matt. 28:18) Accepting this as a statement of fact, there is no obstacle to our believing that One who possessed such power could come and go as the wind, could reveal himself to human eyes in any manner he chose—as a gardener, as a stranger, in a locked room, or by the lakeshore. Or, if he preferred, such a One could be present with his disciples without their being aware that he was near.

Jesus, who in coming to earth to die for the sin-cursed race humbled himself and was made a little lower than the angels, had now been rewarded for his faithfulness. His enemies had put him to death in the flesh, but God

had made him alive in the Spirit. He was no longer flesh, having sacrificed his humanity for the sins of the world.

Yes, Jesus had been raised from the dead and for forty days had been with his disciples, but they had seen little of him. His visits with them had been all too brief, and as the circumstances of each short season of communion were different, the disciples were thus given the definite impression that Jesus had taken on qualities and powers which they did not understand. And now he was with them for what proved to be the last time. They were thoroughly convinced that their Master had been raised from the dead, that they were not being deceived by apparitions produced by overstimulated minds.

On occasions before Jesus was crucified, he had hinted to his disciples that the kingdom which they expected him to establish in the earth would not come immediately. He told them that he was going away and would come again and that following his return the promises of God pertaining to the kingdom would be fulfilled. They were dull of perception and did not grasp this idea very clearly. They did, however, begin to have misgivings concerning what would happen to their Master, and just a few days before his death they questioned him, asking, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"-Matt. 24:3

Then he did go away-in death-and while it was only three days before he appeared to them again, he was not the same. In fact, during the forty days following his resurrection he seemed to come and go several times. Certainly they must have wondered about the meaning of it all; so when he was with them for what proved to be the last time, they inquired again concerning the subject which was so close to their hearts-the kingdom. "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" they asked. (Acts 1:6) Possibly they thought that what he had told them

about his going away and coming again had taken place and that now the time had really arrived for him to establish the kingdom foretold by the prophets.

But they were disappointed! Jesus' reply indicated that they were not yet to know the time when the long-promised kingdom of God would actually be established. He explained that previous to its coming there was a work for them to do. He told them to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with the power and authority of the Holy Spirit and that then they were to publicize the Gospel message of the kingdom throughout all the earth. And then, to their growing amazement over the dissimilarity of this Jesus to the One with whom they had lived and worked prior to Calvary, they saw him ascend into a cloud, thus disappearing from their bewildered sight.

While they stood there in consternation, trying to fathom the meaning of that which defied human understanding, two angels appearing as men assured them that this same Jesus-this Jesus whose powers they did not understand-would come again "in like manner." (Acts 1:10, 11) Now they had the answer to at least one of their questions-Jesus' second coming was still future. What they had just witnessed was the real going away about which he had told them. Now they knew that all the wonderful promises of God relative to the kingdom and its blessings for them and for all mankind must await his return-until "this same Jesus" would come in like manner as they had seen him go.

Yes, Jesus had left his disciples! From this point onward to the end of the age, every true Christian has waited longingly for his return and for the fulfillment of all the glorious promises which were left unfulfilled when he went away. He had come to earth to be a king, but he died as a malefactor. He had come to deliver Israel from the oppressive hand of Gentile misrule; but the religious leaders of Israel had cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Through the

prophet, God had promised Jesus the nations as an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as a possession; but he was killed by the edict of a Roman governor. (Ps. 2:8) He came to heal the sick and to raise the dead. He did heal a few of the ailing ones of his day, and he did awaken some from the sleep of death; but his work was cut short by his enemies, and, as his unbelieving persecutors viewed the matter, he who saved others was unable to save himself.

Truly, much had been prophesied for the Messiah to do that Jesus did not accomplish-many promises of blessing which he did not fulfill-so it is no wonder that his followers should anxiously await his return. It is for this reason that the second coming of Christ is such a prominent teaching of the Bible.

Modernist churches largely ignore this teaching of the Word of God, which is in reality the hope of both the true church and the world. They have ceased to look for Christ's coming as a solution to human problems. Instead, they have joined with the worldly-wise and self-sufficient in promoting various man-made remedies for the world's ills. They no longer believe that the God of heaven, the Creator of the universe, will ever intervene to put a stop to human madness, but insist that all the good which will ever come to the human race will be as a result of their own efforts.

Fundamentalists, on the other hand, still believe in Jesus' second coming; but their conception of what that event will mean for the peoples of the earth is usually far from reassuring. The "orthodox" view is that it will mean the destruction of the earth by fire and the end of hope for all except believers. Others believe that his coming will usher in a thousand years of grace for those who are still alive, but insist that at the end of that thousand years everything mundane will come to an end.

While the Fundamentalists hold varying views as to what will occur following Christ's coming, they are generally

agreed that he will come in a body of flesh, with wounds in his hands, feet, and side, and that he will be suspended in the sky in such a manner that every eye of all human beings living on the earth at that time will see him and thus know of his coming.

We mention these various beliefs and disbeliefs merely to impress the fact that the second coming of Christ as portrayed in the Bible is not only different from all these views but is much more reasonable and understandable than any of them. Back in the Dark Ages one could not have been blamed for holding views concerning the return of Christ which now, in the light of the increased knowledge of our day, are found to be out of harmony with the Bible.

But the plan of God does call for the return of Christ. Jesus himself promised it. So did the prophets and the apostles. It is such an important part of the divine plan that, unless he comes, the creation of the human race will have been in vain. For this reason, former misconceptions and crude theories concerning this great event should not be permitted to hinder us now from ascertaining the simplicity of thought concerning it, as set forth in the Word of God.

An important factor in our approach to the subject is to realize that the One who returns to earth to establish the long-promised kingdom of righteousness is not a human; nor should we expect to see him as such. It is, rather, the highly exalted Jesus, the One who, at the time he was raised from the dead, was rewarded with a nature and glory far above angels and principalities and powers and every name which is named. It is the One who is now the "express image" of the Father's person and who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see. (Heb. 1:3; I Tim. 6:16) This is in keeping with what Jesus said to his disciples before he

was crucified, when he explained that in a little while the world of mankind would see him no more.-John 14:19

It is, then, the divine Christ who returns. This must be taken into consideration as we examine the prophecies relating to this marvelous event in God's plan for human salvation and restoration. Just as the personality and movements of God himself defy description by the limited language designed for the use of human beings, so it is with the divine Christ who, at the time of his resurrection, was exalted to the right hand of the Creator. The language of our stammering tongues is limited in meaning to the material things with which we are surrounded and which our senses can see and touch and smell and taste and hear. But when these words are applied to things spiritual and invisible, it is little wonder that men have arrived at so many conflicting conclusions as to what is meant.

God said, through the prophet, that his thoughts are as much higher than our thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth. (Isa. 55:9) How true! And how necessary, therefore, that God used material things with which we are acquainted to illustrate his thoughts; and this helps us even in a limited way to understand them. One of these illustrations was used by Jesus when he said to Nicodemus that those who are born of the Spirit can come and go as the wind.-John 3:8

The Scriptures explain that Jesus himself was born of the Spirit at the time of his resurrection, but this does not mean that his movements since then have been in every respect like the wind. This is an illustration to convey to our minds some idea of the powers possessed by those in the spirit world. The wind is both powerful and invisible. One cannot tell from whence it comes, nor whither it goes; and Jesus, since his resurrection, is like the wind in this respect. As he explained, Jesus now possesses all power in heaven and in earth. Because he is both powerful and invisible,

marvelous results are accomplished by his presence, yet he is not seen.

Such is the lesson of the wind as applied to Jesus since he was "born again" in the resurrection. But this is only one of the word pictures which the Scriptures give to help us understand the manner and result of his second coming. When the angels said to the amazed disciples who saw the Master ascend into the clouds that he would come again in like manner as they had seen him go, a word picture was thus painted to help us grasp an idea that is almost beyond human comprehension. Yes, he does come "in like manner," but what does that mean? The manner of his going was quiet and unobserved except by that handful of his disciples. A cloud received him out of their sight.

Jesus said, "Behold, I come as a thief." (Rev. 16:15) Paul explained that the Master would come with a "shout," also with the "voice of the archangel," and with the "trump of God." (I Thess. 4:16) Certainly thieves do not blow trumpets and shout, nor did Jesus blow a trumpet when he left the disciples. But these are not contradictions. They are word pictures to help our finite minds comprehend more clearly some of the great factors involved in the second coming of Christ and what that event will mean to all mankind.

We know something about the manner of a thief's coming. We know a little concerning the purpose of blowing trumpets. We are familiar with shouts of command. We know something of the characteristics of clouds and what they signify. When we put all these together and add to them the many other illustrations of the Bible pertaining to Christ's second coming, we begin to understand that what we are to look for is not a human being coming down through the literal clouds, setting fire to the earth and toppling over the mountains, but an upheaval of human society, leading to a conversion of mankind from selfishness

and hate to love and sympathy; from war and destruction to peace and reconstruction; from sickness and death to health and life; from funeral processions to a great homecoming of the dead.

Just as the people of a nation become conscious of changes of government, not by seeing their new rulers face to face, but by the manner in which their own way of life is affected, so the world of mankind will ultimately "see" Jesus, not in a literal sense, but by the evidences all around them of the beneficent results of his rulership of righteousness and love. The prophet refers to Jesus at his second advent as the "Arm of the Lord" -that is, the instrument by which Jehovah's glorious purposes on behalf of mankind will be accomplished-and tells us that this "Arm" will be revealed to all the nations and that "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."-Isa. 52:10

"Oh, I see," is an expression frequently used to denote comprehension. The Scriptures often employ the term "see" in exactly this same manner. It is essential to realize this if we are to find harmony in the many prophetic statements which tell of Christ's second coming. The "Arm of the Lord," which is Jesus, will be revealed in the "eyes" of all the nations; but here the word eyes is a symbol of discernment. So when the angels said to the disciples that they would see the Master returning in like manner, we should understand this also to signify discernment. He went away in a "cloud," and in Revelation 1:7 we read, "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Thus the literal cloud which received him out of the disciples' sight was an illustration of the symbolic clouds which reveal his presence at his return.

Concerning literal sight, Jesus said to his disciples, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more." (John 14:19) Manifestly, therefore, when we read that every eye shall see him, we must understand the meaning to be dis-

cernment. Clouds are often used in the Scriptures to symbolize storms of human passion; and the world will first discern the fact of Christ's return, not by seeing him as a man, literally in the sky, but by recognizing him in the clouds of trouble which will destroy "this present evil world," in preparation for the establishment of his kingdom. (Gal. 1:4) Thus will be fulfilled the "like manner" prophecy of the angel to the amazed disciples as they gazed into the clouds which had just received Jesus out of their sight. His disciples now are the first to recognize his return, even as his disciples then were the only ones to see him go.

In the increasing light of these days, an important factor in connection with Christ's return has been revealed by noting the true meaning of the Greek word **parousia** so often used in the New Testament relating to his return. This word means "presence," not coming. It was this word that was used by the disciples when they asked him concerning the sign of his return. Their question was, "What shall be the sign of thy presence?" (Matt. 24:3) This makes an important difference in the understanding of Jesus' answer to the disciples' question, for it means that the signs which he enumerates betoken the period of his presence, rather than a time when his coming would be near.

Jesus not only described numerous signs of his **parousia**, or presence, but he also explained several points relative to the manner of his presence and what the attitude of his people should be in connection therewith. For example, he admonished his disciples to "watch," telling them that the need of watching was because of the fact that they would not know in advance the time of his return. This implies also that those who do not watch are apt not to be aware of the Master's return, that he would be present without their knowledge.

Jesus also explained that there was a possibility that, after he returned, an unfaithful servant might claim he

had not come, that he had delayed his coming. Thus we see that the fact of Jesus' second presence could be a matter of controversy among his followers. This means that the manner in which Christians see Jesus at his second coming and know of his presence is by discerning the meaning of the signs of the times. If they could see him in the sky with their physical eyes, no one could well deny the fact of his return.

Among the signs which Jesus mentioned as those which would mark the time of his second presence is one which he described as "distress of nations, with perplexity, ... men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke 21:25, 26) Describing details of this sign, Jesus said that the distress of nations would be so severe that unless the days of trouble were shortened, no flesh would be saved. (Matt. 24:21, 22) Briefly, the highlights of this sign are distress of nations, fear, and the threatened annihilation of the race. That this is a realistic description of events through which the present generation has been passing, as well as the fearful foreboding of the people now as they visualize the horrors which might be inflicted upon the human race by the misuse of nuclear fusion and by environmental pollution, there can be no doubt.

In outlining this particular sign of his presence, Jesus quotes from the prophecy of Daniel in which that ancient servant of God foretold that there would be "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1) It is this time of trouble, Jesus explained, that constitutes the "distress of nations" which marks the end of the age and the time of his second presence. Jesus speaks of certain features of this period of distress as "the beginning of sorrows." (Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8) The Greek text here translated "sorrows" has reference to spasms of travail, as in childbirth.

The Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul both refer to this same matter. Paul explains that the destruction of man-made institutions in the day of the Lord would be as travail upon a woman with child. Pains of travail come in spasms, with periods of easement between the "sorrows." (Isa. 42:13, 14; I Thess. 5:3) It is exactly in this manner that we have witnessed the development of the great time of distress which has come upon the nations in our generation. The first major spasm of "sorrow" began in 1914. The global war of 1939-45 was another and a more severe birthpang.

Who but one inspired by the Spirit of God could foretell so accurately, nineteen centuries in advance, what has now become such a tragic reality! No longer can the scoffers say that the events of our day are but a matter of history repeating itself, for surely the world has never before been threatened with a destruction such as is now feared imminent. These are new threats to the human race. The extent of the horrors which now can be inflicted upon the people in time of war defies imagination. What an outlook! Is it any wonder that the hearts of the people are filled with fear? Surely mere human wisdom could not so accurately foretell this condition of things centuries in advance.

Never before has there been such fear! Never before has the very existence of the race been threatened! Jesus foretold both of these developments and said that they would mark the time of his presence. There are two important lessons we should learn from this. It should teach us to have unbounded confidence in the inspiration of the Bible, that it is indeed the Word of God. And it should give us great joy to realize that even though the world is now filled with sorrow, and global calamity is threatened, divine intervention is near—that peace on earth, established by the Prince of Peace, is soon to become a reality.

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" he replied, "It is not

for you to know the times and the seasons." His reply was in keeping with his previous admonition that his followers should "watch" in order that they might know when the time did come. It was only a few moments after he gave this final word to his disciples that Jesus disappeared in the cloud and the angel explained that he would come again "in like manner." Surely we can now see the fore-told symbolic storm clouds of darkness hovering over the fear-stricken and distressed world, just as the prophecies indicate would be the case. As yet, only the watchers can discern the significance of what is occurring. To them it is a cause for rejoicing, not in the world's troubles, but in the fact that the end of all trouble is so near.

Jesus said to his disciples, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28) The deliverance of the Master's true disciples means their exaltation in the "first resurrection," to "live and reign" with Christ "a thousand years." (Rev. 20:4,6) These are to be made like him, to see him as he is, and to share his glory. Their deliverance and union as his "bride" will mean that the time has come for blessings of life to go out to the world, not heavenly life, but the joy of living forever in a restored earthly paradise.-Rev. 19:7; 22:17

It is for this sunrise of joy and life that the world is now longing and waiting. As yet, however, the world has little real hope that the sun will rise. But just as the natural sun rises irrespective of who may be awake to see it and regardless of how few or how many may be waiting for its appearance, so the sun of God's returning favor to the people is certain, and its blessings sure.

CHAPTER V

"TIMES OF REFRESHING"

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."-Acts 3:19-21

TEN days after that little group of ardent disciples stood gazing up into the heavens in bewilderment, wondering at the phenomenon of their beloved Master rising bodily from their midst and disappearing into the clouds, they were startled by another manifestation of the miraculous. It was the day of Pentecost, and as they were waiting and praying in the upper room in Jerusalem, the power of God manifested itself in their midst. It was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to them, and in keeping with that promise, their minds were now enlightened with a better understanding of those things yet to come in the outworking of the divine plan and purpose.

Even before Pentecost they had been assured that their Lord would return. The angel had said that "this same" Jesus shall so come "in like manner" as they had seen him taken into heaven. But not until the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost did they begin to understand the full purpose of his return. Their faith had been strained by the fact that his ministry had come to such an abrupt and fatal end and before many of the promises of God concerning the work of the Messiah had been fulfilled.

Acts, Chapter Three

Peter preached a very enlightening sermon at Pentecost, and a short time later another sermon, which is recorded in Acts, chapter three. Much of the background material for this latter sermon was the miracle performed by Peter and John, namely, the healing of a man who had been unable to walk from the time of his birth. Naturally the people on hand at the time were both excited and curious about this miracle, and Peter took the opportunity to explain matters for them.

Among the audience, apparently, were some who were directly responsible for the death of Jesus, and Peter took occasion to remind them of this. But he explained also that God had raised Jesus from the dead and that it was through faith in him that the impotent man had been healed. Then he said to them, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when [so that, Diaglott] the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord [Jehovah]."

The expression as here used, "the presence of the Lord," literally means "out from the face of the Lord." The thought is a common one in Oriental figurative language, in which turning one's face toward another denotes friendship, or favor, while turning the back is a symbol of enmity, or disfavor. Moses, the ancient lawgiver of Israel said, "The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and give thee peace."

But Peter did not stop with this good news of forgiveness through Christ, for he continued, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things. "-Acts 3:20, 21

Peter then explains that this foretold "times of restitution of all things" had been spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began. Peter con-

tinued: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning everyone of you from his iniquities."-Acts 3:24-26

How enlightening is Peter's explanation of the meaning of God's promises! He wants his hearers to know that through repentance they could enjoy forgiveness of their sins, even though they had crucified the Lord of glory. But, as he explains in verse 26, they were merely destined to be the first to receive this blessing, for at the second presence of Christ there would be times of restitution of all things. Then the Lord would raise up a Prophet like unto Moses, and hearing and obeying him would be mandatory upon all who would live; for any who should fail to obey would be destroyed from among the people.-Acts 3:23

Repentant and consecrated believers of the present age receive life upon the basis of faith in the shed blood, and they receive this life for the purpose of laying it down in divine service. These are begotten to a spiritual life, whereas those who "hear that Prophet" during the Millennium and are faithful to the laws of the kingdom will be restored to the perfection of human life.

Applying the meaningful symbol used by Peter, we see that God turned his back upon man because of his transgression of the divine law. The psalmist wrote, "In His favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Ps. 30:5) If there is life in God's favor, the reverse is true-death results from his disfavor. So it was that, when God no longer caused his face to shine upon his human creatures but, instead, turned his back upon man, death was the result.

And with the lack of God's *favor* came sickness, sorrow, and weeping. Thus, as the prophet declares, weeping has continued throughout this long nighttime of sin and death. And how pitch dark the night has been! The light and warmth experienced by those upon whom God causes his face to shine has been unknown except by the comparatively few throughout the ages who, by faith, have sought the Lord and have been taken into his confidence and shown his plan.

Yes, it has been a dark, cheerless, dismal night. It has been characterized by the chill of human sin and selfishness and made gloomy by the wail of the suffering and dying. The brief span of a dying existence experienced by each individual has usually been plagued by nightmares of fear lest the uneasy lot of today be engulfed in the calamities of tomorrow. How well Job expressed it when he said, "Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble." -Job 14:1

But the bitterness which followed in the wake of transgression, when God turned his back upon his human creatures, is not to last forever. "Joy cometh in the morning," wrote David. Obviously, if it was the withdrawal of divine favor that caused a pall of darkness to settle down over the race to black out human happiness and peace, then the coming of Jesus as the gift of God's love implies the return of that favor to those who accept him and obey his laws.

And this is exactly what Peter meant when he said that times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. During the Millennium that refreshing will come upon all who will then hear "that Prophet." This will be on a global basis and will dispel the darkness of the world's night of weeping, and the light of his countenance will refresh and bless all who in that daytime of divine favor accept the provisions of God's

grace and obey the laws of the kingdom of Christ then operating throughout the earth.

"Times of refreshing"-how meaningful are these words! They imply life and light. The wilderness of sin and death has been as arid as the night has been dark. David calls it "the valley of the shadow of death."

World Knows Not God

The Bible speaks of a famine in the land "for the hearing of the words of the Lord." (Amos 8:11) How true this has been, and how the people have suffered because they have not known God! Created in the image of God, the very nature of man has caused him to cry out for some understanding of the reason he exists and of his ultimate destiny.

Groping through the darkness in an endeavor to find some word of comfort, some assurance that out of all the welter of uncertainty and affliction, sometime, somewhere, there will come a happy tomorrow, man has laid hold upon the poisoned waters of error and superstition, the drinking of which, instead of refreshing the soul, has filled his mind with hallucinations which plague him all the days of his unhappy life. Satan, the great deceiver, has ever been ready to offer to the unsuspecting, one or another of his concoctions, mixed for the express purpose of poisoning the mind against the good God of love.

In the delirium caused by the various poisonous potions, those affected are no longer able to reason. They become blind to logic and deaf to the thunderous tones of the Bible which ring out the assurance that "God is love." Although the Bible states unequivocally that the wages of sin is death, those whose minds have been poisoned by Satan's lie continue to insist that eternal torture, not death, is the penalty for sin. Look where we will, both in heathendom and Christendom, and we find that with few exceptions attempts to approach God and understand his

purpose are thwarted by misleading notions and theories, which instill fear into the hearts of the people and obscure their vision of the one and only true deity, the Creator of heaven and earth. Truly there is a famine in the land for the hearing of the Word of God!

Other Famine Conditions

And famine conditions have prevailed along other lines also. There has been a shortage of all those things which make life truly worthwhile. Even along material lines, what a pitifully small portion of the human race in any period of its existence has really had enough to eat, proper shelter, and comfortable clothes to wear! The number of poverty-stricken and underprivileged persons right in the United States, which has the highest standard of living of any country in the world, is appalling. And how barren of the ordinary comforts of life are untold millions in other parts of the earth.

There has always been a shortage of commodities less material but nevertheless essential to human well-being and happiness. How scarce indeed has been the commodity of peace and goodwill! And how unhappy the world has been without it! Only a few of all the thousands of years of recorded history have been free from the blight of war. And there have been wars other than those precipitated by nations. There have been community wars and family wars. And even worse than all of these has been the lack of peace in human hearts—a lack that cannot be remedied while man is estranged from his Maker.

Look where we will, and from whatever standpoint we may pursue our investigation, we find that the experience of man throughout the centuries has been one of "want," of "thirst," of "desolation." Driven from Eden, and his dominion taken away, he has found himself a wanderer in a dry and thirsty land. How heart-cheering, then, is the promise that this "solitary place" shall be "made glad"

for man, that "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."-Isa. 35:1,2

God's Countenance Lifted Up

How can so great a change be possible, you ask? It is because God will lift up his countenance upon mankind, and all who repent and obey will be refreshed in heart and soul. And what refreshing that will mean when, after approximately six thousand years in the wilderness with the Creator's back turned toward him, man again experiences an abundance of cheer resulting from the sunshine of God's smile.

During the Gospel Age, through repentance, faith in Jesus' shed blood, and full consecration to the Lord, the footstep followers of Jesus gain forgiveness of their sins and sonship with God. But these are only the "first" (Acts 3:26) to benefit from the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Eventually, in the times of restitution, or times of refreshing, all mankind will have the opportunity of being restored to God's favor; and without this refreshment the human race ultimately would perish. The famine resulting from the loss of God's favor would continue to spread its blight of death. Mental and physical starvation would continue to fasten their fangs upon the dying race. But thank God for the assurance that he will lift up his countenance upon the people and that thus they will be refreshed and blessed!

They will be refreshed with a true knowledge of God and of his plan for their eternal life and happiness. They will be refreshed with the assurance of economic security and prosperity of mind and body. They will be refreshed with health, mentally and physically-health so vibrant and vital that sickness of all kinds, even the disease of old age, will become but vague memories of the darkness of the past; for "there shall be no more death."

No single word picture is adequate to portray fully the contrast between the experiences of man during the time

God's favor has been withheld from him and the future time, now near, when the Creator will lift up his countenance upon the fallen race to refresh the people with his favor. It is as the difference between night and day. But even though we conjure up before our mental vision' all the ugly things characterizing the darkness and then visualize by contrast the joys which attend the coming of dawn, still we will have failed to grasp the full significance of what times of refreshing from the face of the Lord will mean to this poor benighted world.

It is a truth of such magnitude that it defies description and complete understanding. It is not mysterious, or vague, or visionary, or beyond the human realm; but it involves the fulfillment of God's promises to bless all the families of the earth with life; and our imperfect minds are unable to grasp the full meaning of perfect life and full peace with God.

"Restitution"

Justification to life by faith came upon those few who repented as a result of Peter's preaching. But Peter explained that when Jesus returned, actual human life for the whole world would result from belief in the returned Lord. He called it restitution-"times of restitution of all things." Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. His first visit prepared the way for man's return to God; and throughout the age some, by faith and repentance, have returned to him. And this is in preparation for the "times of restitution" during the Millennium, which, as Peter adds, were foretold by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began. And each of the prophets did contribute to the melody of hope and inspiration which this divine purpose for man is certain to engender in the hearts of those who hear and believe it.

Moses recorded God's promise to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Moses

also foretold that God would raise up a Prophet like unto him, only greater, and that this Prophet would give life to the people. Peter quotes this prophecy and applies its full import to the work of restitution which would follow the second advent of Christ.

David foretold the coming kingdom of righteousness and described the abundance of its blessings.

Isaiah told of the time when death would be swallowed up in victory and when God would wipe away tears from off all faces. He also foretold that in the "times of restitution" the people would build houses and inhabit them, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.

Jeremiah described the great change that will come in human experience, assuring us that it will no longer be true that men and women will die because of inherited sins and weaknesses. He declares that the people will not then say, "The fathers have eaten the sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge."-Jer. 31:29

Ezekiel assures us that both Jews and Gentiles shall be restored to life, returning to their "former estate." - Ezek. 16:53-63

Daniel describes the permanence of Messiah's kingdom and says that those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."-Dan. 2:44; 12:2

Hosea assures us that God will plague death until its prisoners are released and that death itself will be destroyed. -Hosea 13:14

Obadiah explains that when the kingdom of God is operating in the earth, "saviors" shall come up on Mount Zion. (vs. 21) Jesus is the great Savior of the people, and associated with him will be those who have suffered and died with him during this present Christian era.

Job was one of God's holy prophets. His whole life's experience was a portrayal of God's dealings with the human race. Job was a faithful servant of God, but divine wisdom

permitted affliction to come upon him just as God has allowed evil to afflict the entire human race. But finally God intervened on behalf of Job; his health was restored, and blessings of wealth, etc., similar to those he lost, were restored to him. After hearing a series of questions by God, Job exclaimed, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee."-Job 42:5

To "see" God will be the most refreshing experience enjoyed by man when, through the returned Christ, divine favor is restored to the human race. There have been few of all the millions who have lived and died that have not heard of God "by the hearing of the ear." His name has been upon the lips of the multitudes, but in the hearts of only a few. They will not be able to see him until he lifts up his countenance upon them and they contrast the good they will then enjoy with the evil that plagued them unto death. Even Job will then see God much more clearly than was possible during the time when death was reigning in the earth.

While his affliction was still weighing heavily upon him, Job asked God to let him fall asleep in death until the time of divine disfavor was past. Job was willing to die because he had faith that the time would come when God would turn his face to the people and that then the dead would be restored to life and be refreshed by the smile of his countenance. Then "Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee," Job said in his prayer, "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." (Job 14:15) Yes, man is God's creation, the work of his hands. Man has fallen from his original perfection, but God's work in creating him has not been in vain. He will live again! Life, human, unending and perfect, is his destiny.

The "Sun of Righteousness"

One of the Bible's most beautiful word pictures of the coming times of restitution is that painted by the Prophet

Malachi. He likens the returned Christ to the sun-the "Sun of Righteousness." This "Sun" will rise, declares the prophet, with "healing in his wings." (Mal. 4:2) Here the rays of the sun are likened to great wings upon which it rises and under the shadow of which is found health and life-"healing." It is the rising of this "Sun" that will scatter the mists and gloom of the long night of sin and weeping through which the human race has been stumbling, over the broad road leading to destruction.

Malachi explains that "unto you that fear [reverence] My name shall the Sun Righteousness arise." This is in keeping with Peter's admonition when he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19) Neither of these statements should be misconstrued to limit the grace of God to those who repent and accept Christ in this life. They do indicate, however, that those who are blessed with a knowledge of God's plan and are so in harmony with the principle of righteousness which it reveals that they long for the kingdom of Christ will be among the first to receive its blessings. Indeed, those who have dedicated their lives to following in his footsteps and are faithful even unto death come forth in the "first resurrection" to live and reign with him.-Rev. 20:4,6

Time Required

The limitations of our finite minds make it difficult to visualize the work of restitution in all its aspects. Time enters into it as an important element for consideration. We are so accustomed to thinking in terms of our own short span of life that we are inclined to suppose that what God has promised to do must be accomplished speedily. Actually, however, an entire thousand years is set aside in the plan of God for the refreshing of the people with the returning favor of God.

When the healing rays of the "Sun of Righteousness" first begin to manifest themselves, those who respond and

are blessed will not need to die. In due time the dead will begin to be awakened. The work of the kingdom will continue for a thousand years. Not until the end of that age of warming and healing sunshine will all the mist of darkness be scattered and all the desert conditions of the past made fruitful and plenteous.

It will require the entire millennial reign of Christ and his church before all the dark corners of the earth and of human minds and hearts and bodies are reached and thereby blessed and refreshed. Even then, the only ones to be blessed eternally by the life-giving rays of that Sun of Righteousness will be those who respond in belief and in loving obedience. Those who close their minds and shut up their hearts to the light, refusing to respond in obedience to the divine will then made known, "shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:23) But for all others there will be "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGN IN HEAVEN

**" And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn."
-Matthew 24:30**

FIVE days before Jesus was crucified he rode into the city of Jerusalem on an ass and was hailed as king by a multitude of his followers, who shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." (Matt. 21:9) Following this triumphal entry into the city, Jesus visited the temple and exercised his messianic authority by driving out the money changers. Undoubtedly this was a time of high excitement for the disciples; for they would see in these experiences what appeared to be convincing evidence that the One whom they had accepted and followed in the belief that he had come to be king of Israel and of the world was about to begin his reign. This conviction was of vital interest to them because he had promised that if they were faithful to him they would have the privilege of reigning with him.

Jesus remained in the temple that day and taught the people many important truths concerning his kingdom. He forecast the downfall of Israel's polity and the casting off of the scribes and Pharisees as the mouthpieces of the Lord. While he had just been acclaimed king by many, he knew that the Israelites as a whole, misguided by their hypocritical leaders, were opposed to him and were plotting against his life. Knowing this, he quoted a prophecy of the Old Testament concerning a stone which the builders

rejected but which later became "the head of the corner." This "stone" was Jesus.-Matt. 21:42-44; Ps. 118:22

While the privilege of being associated with Jesus in the kingdom of the Lord was first offered to Israel, this nation had proved unworthy of the honor; so he prophesied that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a nation "bringing forth the fruits thereof." "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," he said, in a final word of condemnation, and added, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."-Matt. 23:38,39

Revealing words are these! Only a matter of hours before this, many had used this very expression in acclaiming Jesus as their king. While Jesus knew that this was a fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy (Ps. 118:26), he knew also it did not mean that the nation as a whole had accepted him; hence this general acceptance must wait for a time still future. Now the nation was cast off from being the special channel of divine blessings to the world and would go through much tribulation during the centuries to come. Finally, however, their eyes were to be opened to recognize Jesus as their Messiah and king, and then all Israel would join in saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Without doubt the disciples heard this prophecy, even as they also heard the words of condemnation against the scribes and Pharisees, who, as Jesus said, were at that time sitting in Moses' seat. Upon leaving the temple following these hours of truth-revealing discussion, Jesus further prophesied that the temple itself would be destroyed-that there would not be one stone left upon another.-Matt. 24:2

When he rode triumphantly into the city as king and was acclaimed such by his friends, the disciples may have thought that his kingdom was about to be established; but now they would know differently. They would know that

his real coming as king to Israel and to the world was future, that he was going away and would return, and that not until then would the people as a whole join in the acclamation, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

While the thought of a further waiting for the kingdom may have been discouraging to the disciples, they were not stumbled by it. Instead they set about to find out, if they could, how long the waiting period would be and how they would know when it was over. So we find them the next day holding a private interview with the Master. The record indicates that they asked him three leading questions:

(1) When shall these things be? (2) What shall be the sign of thy coming? and (3) What shall be the sign "of the end of the world?" -Matt. 24:3

The first of these questions, relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, was not directly answered by Jesus. But Jesus did answer the two questions concerning the sign of his coming and the end of the world. To get the facts clearly before us, however, it is important to remember that in the Greek text the word **parousia** is used and is mistranslated "coming." It means "presence," not "coming." Similarly, it is necessary to a clear understanding of the text to know that the word translated "world" is **aion** and means "age," not this planet on which we live. What the disciples really asked was, "What shall be the sign of thy **presence** and of the end of the **age**?"

Why did the disciples ask what sign, or signs, would accompany the Master's second visit to earth? It was because only through the signs which accompanied his first visit and ministry had they been convinced that he was truly the Messiah. There was no way of knowing what the Messiah would look like; so the disciples, even as did John the Baptist, had to rely on signs. But now Jesus was going away, and there was mystery attached to his going. On one occasion he said to the Jews, "Whither I go, ye

cannot come." (John 8:21) Vaguely his disciples may have realized that he was to be taken away from them through death. He had given them clear indications of this, explaining, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," and, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 6:51; 3:14; 12:32) To them, however, Jesus was the Messiah and King of Israel, and how could he exercise these offices of glory unless he remained alive? To them it was unthinkable that his enemies would be victorious and put him to death. So they were puzzled.

But, despite the things concerning him which they did not understand at that time, there were other points which they did realize. He had just given a clear indication that a time was coming when the nation of Israel would acclaim him as king, as the One who had come in the name of the Lord. To them this meant that he would indeed be away from them for awhile; so they wanted to be sure that when he returned they would know of his presence, even as they had been so highly favored to know of his first presence—a presence which had been revealed by signs. So they asked, "What shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the end of the age?"

A few days after the disciples asked Jesus these questions, he stood before Pilate accused by his fellow Israelites of aspiring to be a king, which, if true and as Pilate would view the matter, would make him guilty of treason against the Roman Empire. Jesus acknowledged that he was destined to be a king: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world," he affirmed. He explained, however, that his kingdom was not of this world, or order [Greek, **kosmos**]. (John 18:36, 37) In other words, when the time would come for him to commence his reign,

it would presage the beginning of a new order, or age; so the disciples were quite right in associating the Master's return with the end of this present age. In reality, signs which would indicate the ending of one age preparatory to the beginning of another would also denote the presence of Christ; for, as we shall see from the Scriptures, it is his return that will bring the age of Satan's rule to an end.

Beginning with Pentecost, and as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of truth at that time, the true followers of the Master have understood more clearly what was involved in his going away and are therefore prepared to understand better the manner of his return and the characteristics of his second presence. In a previous study we learned that Jesus died to redeem the world from death and that in the resurrection he was not restored to life as a man but as a glorious spirit being of the highest order -even that of the divine nature.

Concerning God we read that he is "invisible." Here, then, is a most important reason why we must depend upon signs to indicate the second presence of Christ. It is because, now, being like the Heavenly Father in nature, and no longer a man, he is "invisible" to human eyes. It is, then, an invisible King whose presence in the world to establish a kingdom is revealed by signs. In Jesus' answer to the disciples' question as to what would constitute the evidence of his presence, the Master not only told them what the signs would be but also emphasized the necessity of watching faithfully for those signs so that they might know of his return. He explained that the time of his presence would be as a "thief"; hence, while present, he would be unknown to all except the faithful watchers who detected the signs and were able to read them correctly.-Matt. 24:43; Rev. 3:3

When the disciples asked concerning the evidence of the Lord's return, they used the Greek word **semeion**, which is

the singular form of the word and is properly translated by our word "sign," also in the singular. However, when Jesus answered their question, he made it plain that there would be more than one sign. For example, Luke quotes part of Jesus' reply, saying: "And there shall be signs [plural] in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and 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 coming upon the earth: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."-Luke 21:25,26

In addition to these signs, Jesus mentions others; but for our present study we will confine ourselves to this list, as we believe that it is quite sufficient-when we note the marvelous manner in which they are being fulfilled-to establish the fact that we are even now living in the days of the presence of the Son of man, earth's future King. While Luke quotes Jesus as mentioning signs which would appear in the "sun, and in the moon, and in the stars," Matthew's account of this same statement refers to it simply as a sign that would appear in heaven. The thought is the same, however, for the sun, moon, and stars constitute what we speak of as the "heavens."

Matthew's account tells us that when the sign of the Son of man appears in heaven, "all the tribes of the earth mourn," while Luke's report states that, accompanying the signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity," and that there would be a roaring of the sea and of the waves. Luke explains that the distress of nations with perplexity is due to the fact that the "powers of heaven" are shaken. The sign in the heavens, therefore, is the fact that their powers over the affairs of the earth are shaken, causing worldwide distress and an almost universal fear of still greater tragedies to come.

What, then, is meant by the statement that "the powers of heaven shall be shaken"? The Apostle Peter was one who heard this great prophecy of the present time directly from the lips of the Master, and later he wrote an epistle concerning the time of the Lord's presence and indicated that one of the evidences thereof would be the fact that "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." (II Pet. 3:10) For, what Jesus described as a shaking of the powers of the heavens Peter explained as a passing away of the heavens, their elements melting with fervent heat. And what Jesus referred to as "distress of nations with perplexity," with the "sea and the waves roaring," Peter identified as "the earth also and the works that are therein" being burned up.

All of this is, of course, symbolic language—the literal earth "abideth forever." (Eccl. 1:4) It is well to note in this connection that Peter speaks of heavens and an earth that passed away at the time of the Flood; but the literal sun, moon, and stars, and the literal earth remained as they were. The apostle spoke of the heavens and earth which were before the Flood as making up the "world that then was." (II Pet. 3:5, 6) The Greek word here translated "world" is **kosmos**, meaning "order," or "arrangement." It was the order of things, the "civilization" that existed before the Flood, that came to an end as a result of the Deluge; hence, by following through with this prophetic analogy, we learn that it is the present social order, the present civilization, that comes to an end as a result of Christ's return and presence as the prospective King of the new world of tomorrow.

What, then, is symbolized by the "heavens" and the "earth" which pass away at the presence of the Lord? There are scriptures which give us a clue to the proper

answer to this question. For example, Jesus, in speaking of some of the elements of the symbolic earth, said that there would be a roaring of "the sea and the waves." Turning to Isaiah 17:12, 13, we read: "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters."

Comparing this with Jesus' statement concerning the "distress of nations with perplexity," it becomes obvious that his reference to the roaring of the sea and the waves was his way of illustrating the international distress which would result from the presence of the Lord. This language, translated into present-day usage and experience, is graphically descriptive of the international chaos which has been continuously and relentlessly on the increase in this our day. It is a time of acute distress and perplexity; and in the Greek text the word that is translated "perplexity" really means "no way out." And how true it is that the nations can find no way out of this distress! Every hoped-for remedy, when attempted, results in failure, while the distress continues and increases.

It seems evident, then, that the "earth," with its various elements, symbolizes the civil governments and other arrangements under which the peoples of the world have lived in a more or less orderly manner throughout the centuries. Now order is giving way to disorder, as the **kosmos**, or order of things which we have called civilization rapidly deteriorates into chaos. The ingenuity of man, scientific and otherwise, is being utilized chiefly in promoting destructive strife among the nations and, oftentimes, within the nations.

Old standards of law and order are giving way to the anarchistic theory that one person has as much prerogative as another to determine what is right and what is

wrong. Hence, adding to other phases of worldwide distress is the rapid spread of moral anarchy. How aptly, indeed, does the restlessness of the sea illustrate this breaking down of a world order! The Prophet David, using the same symbolism and referring to the kingdoms of the world as "mountains," tells us that though the mountains "be carried into the midst of the sea," we should not fear.
-Ps. 46:2,3

What, then, are the "heavens" which, up to the due time for the presence of the Lord, exercised "power" or control over the symbolic earth? A very definite factor in holding together the civilization which we now see falling apart has been the power of religious restraint. This has been true in practically every part of the earth, in heathendom as well as in Christendom. The restraining views and methods have varied in different lands, depending upon the alleged characteristics of the particular god or gods whose laws were made binding upon the people; but practically everywhere, and for centuries, the governments of the earth have controlled the people by making them believe that the laws which they bound upon them had been ordained by a deity or deities whose authority was supreme and whose ability to punish lawbreakers was unlimited.

Now, however, this element of world order is rapidly losing its power to control the people; and one of the great fears of society's doctors, who are trying to keep a dying world alive, is that the onrushing forces of atheism, implemented as they are by powerful antireligious governments, will completely destroy religious influence in the affairs of men.

This, we believe, is what the Master referred to as the shaking of the powers of the heavens. We know that the literal heavens exercise a tremendous power over the literal earth; hence the symbolism in which ecclesiastical authority

over the nations is seen as the "heavens" is a *very* apt one indeed. Through the prophet the Lord said, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." (Isa. 55:9) Here is the thought behind the symbolism of the heavens-they are higher than the earth, and men have been caused to believe that the edicts of the religious institutions of the earth have been above the ways of men and hence should be obeyed as coming from God.

It is true that God's ways are higher than ours and also that they are true and righteous altogether. But we should remember that a false god is the prince of this world, or, as Paul describes him, the "god of this world." (John 12:31; II Cor. 4:4) This is Satan, the Devil, the archenemy of God and man, and the deceiver of all nations. (Rev. 20:1-3) This unseen "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) has ruled the world to a large extent through the false religious systems of the earth.

In the Book of Revelation we are told of a "woman ... which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (Rev. 17:18) This woman is also described as a "city"-an unholy city. (Rev. 17:5; 18:2-4, 10) It is said that this woman is "the mother of harlots" and that the "inhabitants of the earth" were made "drunk with the wine of her fornication." (Rev. 17:2) In contrast to this picture we are told of another woman, a "chaste virgin," who becomes the "bride" of Christ and who, with him, is to reign over the earth for a thousand years. She also is spoken of, together with her Bridegroom, as a "city"-the "holy city, new Jerusalem," which comes "down from God out of heaven." (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 20:4, 6; 21:2, 10) It is clear, we think, that the harlot woman who commits fornication with the kings of the earth represents a counterfeit of Christ's kingdom-that counterfeit which men have called "Christendom" but which is described by God as "Babylon."

Perhaps the most marked identification of this harlot woman is contained in the assertion that the nations were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. This is a very apt symbolism of the union of the apostate church with the civil governments of Europe. Christ is the true Head and Bridegroom in the kingdom to be established by him during his second presence. The true church becomes his bride following her exaltation to glory, honor, and immortality in the "first resurrection." (Rev. 19:7; 20:6) Her test of loyalty to her prospective and heavenly Bridegroom has been to wait for his return and meanwhile to suffer the reproaches of the world while she lays down her life in his service, preparing herself to be united with him in the kingdom.

But the church which became apostate was not willing to wait for her Lord to return. Instead, harlot-like, she joined hands with civil governments and then claimed that this union constituted Christ's kingdom on earth. This was the wine, the doctrine, of her fornication, and with it the nations were led into a drunken frenzy of almost continual warfare with one another, all blasphemously in the name of the Lord. One section of Christendom was pitted against another from time to time and in whatever manner it suited the best interests of their unholy mistress, the apostate church.

This does not imply that there was nothing good in the laws sanctioned and upheld by the unholy alliance of church and state, for in some respects those laws were taken from the Scriptures. Murder on the part of individuals was prohibited, although legalized murder, called war, was glorified. Theft was forbidden, although in the name of the Lord the people were robbed in many ways by both the civil and religious authorities which held them in virtual slavery. The divine institution of family and home was upheld, and in some other respects the laws of the

true God were copied. Good or bad-and partly both-the restraining influences of these higher powers, which reached the people by means of the civil authorities of the day, held civilization together.

It was far from an ideal world, but a semblance of order was maintained, even though largely because of the ignorance and superstition of the people, which through the centuries had been fostered by the harlot woman. The people were made to believe that any inclination to disobey "the powers that be" would lead to dire consequences-if not in this life, then surely after death. The fear of eternal torture was held over them as a whip to keep them in slavery to a system under which princes grew fat in luxury and priests grew rich in their exploitation of the people by promising them a quick passage through an imaginary, yet Devil-inspired, purgatory. It mattered not to the rulers if their subjects were ignorant paupers, so long as they obeyed their dictates without question and kept the peace.

Is it a dark picture which we have drawn? Well, it happened in the "Dark Ages"-a period which was made dark by the misrule of a counterfeit kingdom of Christ. But it was not to last forever! The light that foretells the approach of a new day gradually began to dawn. Napoleon, whatever his sins may have been, struck a deathblow to the system that ruled the world during the Dark Ages when he took the pope a prisoner. The discovery of America and the growth of American democracy also helped to break the shackles which had bound Europe. The rapid increase of knowledge along all lines which resulted from the invention of movable type was another contributing factor leading toward liberty.

But, while the almost universal control of the old world by the power which was seated in Rome was broken, the ideology of that wicked system was adopted independently by most of the rulers of Europe. They made state churches

out of many of the Protestant systems, uniting with them as they had done formerly with Catholicism. So the "powers of the heavens," though now divided, still ruled, still held the people under restraint. (Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:26) This situation continued without much outward change until the beginning of World War I, in 1914.

With the outbreak of the war, forces came into play which began drastically to shake the powers of the heavens -ecclesiastical control. In that war, as in the past, the "wine" of Babylon's fornication flowed freely. In Germany, and in the countries allied with Germany, the soldiers were told by the clergy that if they died on the field of battle fighting the "enemy" they were sure of a heavenly reward, the reason being that in fighting for their government, they were fighting for God. In all the countries allied against Germany the men were told the same thing. Yes, to the shame of the American clergy, they too joined in pouring this "wine," which had been prepared originally by the apostate church of Rome.

The "wine of fornication" did its work, at least partially, during that First World War, but the aftereffects were not at all what the nations expected. The intermingling of thoughts and viewpoints which was bound to occur when young and thinking men of all parts of the world were brought together-sometimes in the trenches, sometimes in prison camps and in other ways-had an effect. Doubts were raised in the minds of many as to whether their side alone had been fighting for the Lord. That the objectives of the war on both sides were not attained caused a further disillusionment, as, through the trying years which followed, that stark fact became more and more apparent.

With disillusionment came a worldwide turning to pleasure, legitimate and otherwise. The people who, through the distressing years of the war, fought for God, as they had supposed, now, in fulfillment of the Scriptures,

became "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." (II Tim. 3:1,4) But even more significant, the people of the world, on the whole, not only forgot God, but became unbelievers. The extent to which this is true is now apparent by the fact that in the two most religious countries of the world, the United States and Great Britain, not more than one in ten ever steps inside a church.

But this is not all. Out of that World War came the birth of the first communist government in Russia. From the very start one of the characteristics of that government was its opposition to religion. The Greek Catholic Church, which was the illicit mistress of the czarist government, was ruthlessly banned and her fraudulent practices brought publicly to the attention of the people in many ways. The teaching of atheism was encouraged and sponsored by the government.

Since then it is true that, for reasons of expedience, Moscow claims to have granted freedom of religion within Russia, but this is largely in name only. While the Greek Catholic Church has been given a "legal" standing, this means only that it is permitted to carry on with its ritual on behalf of a minority of the older generation which has not accepted Moscow's atheistic teachings, under which the youth of the land are reared.

And now this atheistic government, seizing the opportunity presented by a weakened world, is expanding its influence beyond Russian territory. A large part of Germany is still subjected to this government-sponsored ideology of unbelief. The shadow is cast over Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and is threatening other nations. Meanwhile, because such a very small minority of the people in the remaining countries of the earth have any faith in God, they are the more open to the growing influence of an ideology which officially rejects the thought of being subject to laws which are alleged to have come from a higher power.

It is this situation, the world over that is contributing to the fear of those who wish to restore the status quo of the pre-1914 civilization. This is one of the great fears in the United States, particularly among those high in the government. One of the evidences of this is the fact that presidents have sent personal representatives to Rome to confer with the pope. The time was when a word from the Vatican would have restored at least an outward semblance of order in Europe. But the powers of the heavens are being shaken, and more and more their ability to hold the 'old order together is weakening.

This, then, is the sign that is appearing in the symbolic heavens, the sign of the presence of Christ, the prospective King of earth. On one occasion Jesus raised the question as to whether he would find faith on the earth when he came, and now we can see that this question was well justified. (Luke 18:8) And, as Jesus foretold, the people of the nations are mourning, some because of the distress that has come directly to them and to their families, and others because they see that the civilization which gave them prosperity and power over their fellows is falling apart.

A very realistic description of this is given us in Revelation, chapter 18. The opening verse of this chapter depicts the return of our Lord. John describes him as "a mighty angel," whose power caused the earth to be filled with his glory. First he pronounces doom upon the counterfeit of his kingdom and bids those loyal to him to separate themselves therefrom, that they be not partakers of the plagues which destroy it. This message has already gone out to the Lord's people, and thousands have responded. Now the work of destruction is well advanced, and we can see the beginning of the foretold "mourning" of those who prospered so greatly under this system.

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and

lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning," writes the apostle. John also writes that the supporters of this system will say: "Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked in gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour [the hour of her judgment] so great riches is come to nought."-Rev. 18:9,10,16,17

The Scriptures are not limited to the use of only one symbolism to illustrate great truths of the divine plan. We have seen how fitting is the lesson of the powers of the heavens being shaken as one of the signs which betoken the second presence of the Lord. We have seen also that in full harmony with this is the Revelator's description of the waning powers of the ecclesiastical heavens, when he tells of the fall and destruction of mystic Babylon. But it is interesting in this connection to note that in the vision of this destruction of the harlot woman John sees her "utterly burned with fire."-Rev. 18:8

So it is that "fire," as well as "shaking," is one of the symbols used to portray the overthrow of various elements of "th is present evil world." {Gal. 1:4} For this reason "fire" is associated with the manifestation of the presence of Christ; that is, he is revealed by fire as well as by the shaking of the heavens. On this point the Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonian church, says: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."-11 Thess. 1:7,8

The "mighty angels" which are to be revealed with Jesus are undoubtedly the members of his glorified church. The word angel means "messenger," and these will be messengers with him to dispense the blessings of the new kingdom. But first every vestige of Satan's empire must be de-

strayed, and all opposition to the laws of God's new world broken. The gathering to himself of those who will reign with him is part of the work of Christ in the first years of his second presence. This is fully accomplished before the old order is completely destroyed; hence Paul's reference to the "flaming fire" which reveals the presence of Christ when his church is with him is a sign which is still future. It is closely associated with the fire which destroys mystic Babylon. We can even now see the beginning of the smoldering flame; but Babylon still lives, although dying. Christians who are faithful to their Lord shall be with him before the final phase of her destruction is accomplished.

Now let us observe that it is by both the shaking of the heavens and the flaming fire that the presence of Christ is revealed. Matthew's account of the Lord's prophecy on this point says that when the sign of the Son of man appears in heaven—that is, the shaking of the powers of the heavens, rendering them incapable of adequately controlling the restless masses as they had once done—then all the tribes of the earth would mourn. Following this, "they" see the Son of man coming in the heavens. The text indicates that the mourning of the people commences before they see the real cause of their distress; but to the Lord's own people, the faithful watchers, both the shaking of the symbolic heavens and the distress of the nations in the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known are signs of his presence and of the end of the age. It is important thus to distinguish between **our** reading of the signs and the more complete development of them by which the eyes of **all** mankind will be opened to discern that it is the return of Christ, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" in preparing to establish his kingdom that has brought about the destruction of the old order which men call civilization.—Rev. 19:16

In this connection it is well to understand the manner in which the people of all nations will "see" the Lord. We

have already noted the scriptures which emphasize that the resurrected Christ, as a personality, cannot be seen literally by human eyes, that both he and the Heavenly Father "dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (I Tim. 6:16) But just as the heavens in which the sign of the Son of man appears are symbolic, so also is the sight with which his presence is discerned. The use of the eye as a symbol of discernment is quite common in the Scriptures. Speaking of the ability of his disciples to comprehend certain truths concerning the divine plan which were hidden to others, Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear."-Matt. 13:16

Later the Apostle Paul, describing the knowledge of the Early Church concerning the first presence of Jesus, when he came as a man to redeem men, said, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9) The Prophet Isaiah, writing of Christ and describing him as the "Arm of the Lord," informs us that the Arm of the Lord will be revealed "in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isa. 52:20; 53:1) Job, expressing his confidence in the Creator, said, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" -but the Scriptures tell us that actually no man can see God, in a literal sense, and live.-Job 19:26; Exod. 33:20

These are but samples of the many passages of Scripture in which the words see and sight, as well as the eye itself, are used to symbolize discernment. And it is in this sense that every eye will eventually see Jesus in the clouds of heaven. It means that they will discern the fact of his presence by virtue of the sign in the heavens; that is, that the former powers of ecclesiastical

control over the masses have been broken, resulting in world chaos.

But even so, it is well to remember that in our study of the development of the plan of God we are not dealing with minutes or hours or days, but with years and ages. What requires but a few words of Scripture to describe and a few seconds to read, may and usually does refer to that which takes years in development. So it is with the sign of the Son of man which appears in the symbolic heavens. It has already appeared, and, as watchers, we discern it and understand its meaning. The world sees also, and fear fills their hearts because of it; but as yet they do not discern its real meaning; they do not see that it means the presence of a new King of earth, a new spiritual ruling power, the foretold of "new heavens" which, in association with a new symbolic earth, will be the new world of tomorrow.

Later, as the sequence of world-changing events continues to emphasize to the people the utter futility of all human efforts to bring order out of chaos, and peace and prosperity out of war and starvation, in the Lord's own way they will be made to realize the true meaning of what is occurring—that Jesus has come, and as the Arm of Jehovah his first work is to set aside the old order of things which is based upon selfishness, that the people might the more fully realize their need of Christ's coming kingdom. (Ps. 110:1-6) Then they will realize that what they first thought to be a dire calamity concerning which they said, "Alas, alas," was but evidence that the King of a new world order had come and was preparing to establish his righteous kingdom in the earth.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRIGHTSHINING OF HIS PRESENCE

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming [presence] of the Son of man be."-Matthew 24:27

NEVER has the presence of an earthly potentate been so glorious and all-powerful as to be likened properly to a brightness sufficient to enlighten the whole world -from the east unto the west. This, however, is to be true of the presence of Jesus; for this is his own description of the manifestation of his presence as he explained it to his disciples when he answered their question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming [presence], and of the end of the world?" The fact which at once strikes us as we ponder the meaning of these words is that they do not, and could not, apply to the presence of a human king but can be understood only with relation to a divine being, One who, like the Creator himself, is invisible to the human eyes and is all-powerful.

The Master's own preface to this explanation of the evidence of his second presence bears out this conclusion; for he warned his disciples not to believe it if anyone claimed to have discovered him in some secret hiding place, for he would not be present in the earth in that manner,^o that is, as a human. Jesus had previously explained that his presence (Greek, **parousia**) would be as a "thief in the night," that is, unknown to all except those who would be watching for him; but he did not want them to understand this to mean that he would be hidden away somewhere as a human and that his followers could discover his whereabouts by searching for him.

The disciples had asked concerning the indications of the Master's second presence, and in telling them of his lightninglike presence he not only gave them one of the signs but explained much concerning the manner in which his presence would become known-first to his own people, and ultimately to the whole world. What then did Jesus mean when he said that his presence would be like the lightning, shining from the east to the west? Luke answers this question when, also quoting Jesus, he says, "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day."-Luke 17:24

The meaning of these words is evident: Jesus' presence will enlighten the world. And as light is used in the Scriptures to symbolize knowledge-the knowledge of God and his plan for the salvation of the people-what the Master really told the disciples in symbolic language was that his second presence on the earth would be manifested by a great increase of knowledge that would ultimately become so all-pervading that the knowledge of the glory of God would be caused to fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea.-Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2;14

While the "lightning" associated with the presence of the Lord first of all precipitates a storm of human passions destroying the old social order, it symbolizes much more than this. As we have seen, the Scriptures indicate clearly that the primary thought is that of enlightenment-indeed, it is through the enlightenment of the people that the world is brought to an end. This prophetic enlightenment in the last days of Satan's world is described by the Prophet Daniel as an increase of knowledge, accompanied by much and rapid travel over the earth-a worldwide "running to and fro." (Dan. 12:4) And Daniel associates this increase of knowledge with a great "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1)

It is apparent from this and other prophecies that the beginning of Christ's second presence is marked by a world-wide upheaval of civilization, in which the kingdoms and governments of this world, one after another, are to be destroyed.

Jesus qualified the lightning which he said would reveal his **parousia**, or presence, saying that it would come out of the east and shine even unto the west. There is only one great light which regularly traverses an east to west course in its enlightenment of the earth, and that is the sun. But the effect of the Master's presence is not in every way like the sun; hence Jesus did not use the Greek word which denotes sunlight. The word he did use in this remarkable illustration of the manner in which his presence would be revealed is **astrape**.

This is the only Greek word in the New Testament translated lightning, but it is also used to describe other forms of light. It is the word which is used to describe the light of a candle (Luke 11:36); and it is also used with respect to the brilliance of the garments of the angels at Jesus' tomb following his resurrection. (Luke 24:4) It is properly translated lightning when associated with thunder, but the word is broad enough in its meaning to denote a "brightshining" of any nature.

It was this word that Jesus used when he said his **parousia** would be like a brightshining coming out of the east, ultimately illuminating the whole earth. Thus far the enlightenment has been largely along material and scientific lines, but in God's due time it will include the light of the knowledge of the glory of God; for it will be then that Jesus will be that "true light" which will enlighten every man that cometh into the world. The east-to-west shining of the Master's presence suggests the rising of the sun; and as we are all aware, those who are awake and watching for the dawn are the first to know that a new day is ap-

preaching; for they alone see the gray streaks in the east, which are the harbingers of the rising sun. It is this blessed privilege that is now being enjoyed by the Lord's watchmen on the walls of Zion.

The first to be blessed by the brightshining of the Master's presence are his own people, his footstep followers. The knowledge of truth pertaining to the divine plan is also symbolized in the Bible as "meat," and Jesus promised that when he returned he would serve his people with "meat in due season." (Luke 12:37; Matt. 24:45) This is another promise which indicates that the Lord's own people would be the first to be enlightened by the brightshining of his presence. This promise has been, and still is being, wonderfully fulfilled.

The Scriptures foretold that following the death of the apostles there would develop a great falling away from the true faith of the Gospel and that the truth of the divine plan would become corrupted. This occurred with respect to practically every doctrine of the divine plan. The apostasy developed until the nominal church actually set up a counterfeit kingdom of Christ by uniting with the civil governments. Thus the hope of the real kingdom of Christ and the blessings it would bring to the people was lost.

The Scriptures clearly reveal that in the creation of man it was God's intention that he live forever on the earth and have dominion over it. Man sinned and lost the privilege of living, being sentenced to death. There is no truth more clearly taught in the Bible than that "the wages of sin .is death." (Rom. 6:23) But during the Dark Ages the term "death" was .distorted to mean eternal torture in a fiery hell, and the notion was developed that Jesus came to save sinners from this terrible future abode of the wicked, and that those who believe on him would be taken to heaven instead. Thus this basic truth of the Bible was buried in the rubbish of human theories.

The Scriptures teach, on the contrary, that Jesus came to die for Adam and his entire race, that they might have an opportunity to be restored to life on the earth. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" is the way the Apostle Paul states the matter. (I Cor. 15:22) The period in which man will be restored to life on the earth is described by the Apostle Peter as "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21) This great hope of the world is now seen by the faithful watchmen in Zion, being one of the rays of heart-cheering light which has gladdened the hearts of those who have first detected the brightshining of the Master's presence.

Many of the false doctrines of the Dark Ages had a semblance of scriptural support. It was thus with the claim that believers go to heaven when they die. The Scriptures do hold out a heavenly hope for the true followers of the Master, but the reason they are called to this high position in the divine plan is not for the purpose of snatching them from eternal torture, but that they, as representatives of the human race, may have the privilege of reigning with Christ after they have been exalted to glory in the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4,6) and, together with him, share in the blessing of all the families of the earth. This great truth was made clear to the watchers in Zion as a result of the brightshining of the Master's presence.

It was particularly fitting that the true relationship between the heavenly calling of the church and the hope of restitution for the world should be made more clear at this time, for it is the will of God that the faithful followers of the Master during the Gospel Age should proclaim as widely as possible the great hope of "restitution" for all mankind when the opportunity is given to them. The kingdom age, when the world of mankind will be given the privilege of living on the earth forever, is now near.

We are apt to forget that the enlightenment of the world today is something that has developed suddenly, in comparison with the thousands of years of the past during which there was little or no increase of knowledge. Both with respect to the general education of the people and in the matter of scientific achievement, the world has advanced incomparably more in the last one hundred years than in the previous six thousand years. It is claimed that today knowledge is doubling every ten years.

But it was not until the fifteenth century, when the printing press with movable type came into use, that there was much opportunity for real progress in scientific knowledge and achievement. It is impossible, therefore, to attribute the progress of our day to the growing intelligence of man, as evolutionists would like to have us do.

There is only one reasonable explanation as to why the world should continue in ignorance for thousands of years, and then suddenly emerge into an era in which-throughout some parts of the earth at least-children of ten know more than did the lords and barons of the past-an era also in which large masses of the people, including wage earners, enjoy comforts of life unknown to the wealthiest of the ancients. That explanation is the one given us in the Bible; namely, that it is due to the brightshining of Christ's presence, bringing about the "increase of knowledge" which the Prophet Daniel said would characterize the "time of the end" of this present evil social order.-Dan. 12:4

The use of the printing press signaled the beginning of a new day of progress, although it was years before the art of printing became general enough, and a sufficient volume of information was made available by this means, to change the course of the world. But finally the printed page began to make knowledge available to everyone, and the darkness of the past could no longer resist the increasing

brilliance of the rays of knowledge which began to flood the earth more and more.

Very significantly, the first book to be produced by printing was the Bible. In the early part of the nineteenth century large Bible societies were formed, and the Bible, "the torch of civilization," was beginning to flood the world in ever-increasing volume. Public schools and compulsory education became the order of the day, largely made possible by the printed page. Newspapers, magazines, and public libraries became general. These various media for the dissemination of knowledge were soon augmented by the telegraph, telephone, radio, and now, television. Thus suddenly the world was ushered into an era in which the developments in one part of the earth were known and published internationally within a matter of hours and, in many instances, within minutes.

With the increase of knowledge, rapid means of travel were soon developed, so that within less than a century (previous to which no progress had been made along this line for thousands of years) the people of all nations began to traverse the earth by steamboat, by railroad, by automobile, and by jet plane. While our forefathers up to a little more than a century ago traveled no faster on the average than ten to twelve miles an hour, it is now common to cross continents and oceans at speeds of many hundreds of miles an hour.

That which is being accomplished in the viewpoints and the outlook of the people makes this prophetic increase of knowledge one of the marked fulfillments of the Master's prediction concerning the brightshining of his presence. The ability and opportunity to read, the airplane, the radio, television, and other scientific achievements of this marvelous day in which we are living would not necessarily, as such, be marked evidence of the Lord's presence—what is more significant is the impact of these on the

minds of men. Through the increase of knowledge manifested in these many ways, the whole world has been changed. We can go even further and say that thereby the present social order is fast being destroyed, for the old concepts and traditions which held it together are rapidly being cast aside, and their power to hold mankind under control is waning. This is a necessary first step in preparation for the blessings of Christ's kingdom, which are to follow the complete passing away of the present social order.

The western segment of the civilization which is now crumbling under the impact of increasing knowledge is called "Christian"-and indeed some of the moral standards and laws of the pre-1914 governments were based in part upon the ethical code of the Bible. But, intermingled with these righteous laws, were corrupting superstitions, so gross in their misrepresentation of real Christian principles that they blasphemed the true God of love. Take, for example, that God-dishonoring doctrine of eternal torture and its slightly more merciful companion, purgatory. These were long held as whips over the backs of the people to make them obey "the powers that be." Through the use of these fear-instilling superstitions, the people-particularly in Europe-were exploited and robbed, while kept in abject subjection to a corrupt ruling clergy class, which used the arm of the state to enforce the unjust demands of an apostate church.

But with the increase of knowledge these shackles of fear and superstition are gradually being broken. Indeed, in most parts of Europe, where the people suffered most because of them, they have almost completely lost their hold upon the masses. True, in the turning away from the evils of corrupt teachings and practices, the good is discarded as well, and the world is fast becoming atheistic. Moral and religious restraints of all kinds are on the wane, and where the masses are not kept under rigid subjection

by dictatorship, the world is fast reaching the point where every man is a law unto himself.

But this is merely the first, the immediate result of the increase of knowledge-the brightshining of the Master's presence. And it is an essential result; for in order that the minds of the people may be prepared to understand, worship, and serve the true God, they must first lose all confidence in, and respect for, the false gods which they have been worshipping. While it is true that some of the moral laws of professed Christianity have been in harmony with the Bible, the teachings of the nominal church as a whole have been so distorted and so corrupted by the traditions of men that they have not revealed to the masses the true God of the Scriptures.

Therefore, in turning away in unbelief from the gods of the creeds, the people are not rejecting the true God; for, in reality, they have never known him. It is the god of the creeds that has been declared dead; for those who propagated this pronouncement never knew the true God of the Bible, the God of wisdom, justice, love, and power. So it is that the prophetic increase of knowledge, by destroying men's faith in the superstitions of the past, is likewise breaking down their confidence in the institutions and governments built upon those superstitions, even inciting the people, in many instances, to clamor for their overthrow. Thus in this very understandable manner the brightshining of the Master's presence is bringing about the collapse of the old world in preparation for the establishment of the new, that is, God's world of tomorrow. The rays of light from the Master's presence-the foretold increase of knowledge-are penetrating into the marshes of superstition and the quagmires of error, producing a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation."

One of the prophecies which calls attention to the destroying power of knowledge when it exposes the super-

stitutions of the past is that of 11 Thessalonians 2:8, in which Paul explains the manner in which the great antichrist is destroyed as a result of the second presence of Christ. He explains that before Christ would return there would come a great falling away from the true faith of the Gospel, that an apostasy would occur, making possible the development of a powerful antichrist system, which he describes as the "man of sin."

Then Paul explains that when Christ's presence did become a reality at the end of the age, its manifestation would destroy the antichrist. We quote: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming [Greek, **parousia**, meaning 'presence']"-11 Thess. 2:8

Notice that first Paul speaks of a consuming work which would be done by the "Spirit of his mouth." The "Spirit" of the Lord's mouth is the Word of God, and it was the printing press flooding the world with Bibles in preparation for the brightshining of the Master's presence that began to weaken the stranglehold this wicked church-state system of Europe-the counterfeit kingdom of Christ-had upon the nations of the world. But following this consuming, or undermining, of prestige was to come, as Paul explains, the destruction of this system by the "brightness of his presence."

The real antichrist system whose destruction is thus foretold, is not merely a false church but rather the union of a false church with civil governments. The claim was that this union constituted Christ's kingdom on earth. Fragments of this unholy alliance still exist, but the system made up of the union of the two is to all practical purposes already destroyed. The very idea of church-state union as a form of government to rule nations is today scorned by all the politicians and statesmen of the world

who hope to be given a hearing by the enlightened public. True, a nominal church-state government still exists in Great Britain, but it is not the real ruler of the British people and has not been for many years.

The destruction of the church-state ideology as a form of government was accomplished by the increase of knowledge. It could not stand up before the light of this day of preparation for the real kingdom of Christ. True, the Roman church still lives and is making every possible effort to assert its influence in the political affairs of the nations, particularly in the United States; but any gains she may make are doomed to be but temporary, for a public enlightened by the increasing knowledge foretold in the prophecies will not long submit to threats of being re-enslaved by a system which ruined Europe and from which the Founding Fathers of America fled in their search for liberty and peace.

We are not arguing that the motives which have induced the destroying attacks upon the civilization built upon the ideology of Rome have always been righteous. In most instances those who would replace this rulership with another have nothing to offer that is very much better. The point is that knowledge, or enlightenment, concerning the evils of Christendom has prepared the way for selfish men to destroy the system. Human wisdom is quite unable to find a solution for the problems of the world which already have been precipitated by this uprising of the people against the evil exploitations of the past-only Christ's kingdom can do that. But meanwhile, the way is being prepared for that kingdom by the knowledge which has come to the world because Christ has returned.

The prophecies of the Bible, particularly those pertaining to the return of Christ to be the King of earth, are replete with meaningful symbols. A very revealing example of this is the Apostle Paul's prophecy of the second advent

of Christ, in which he says, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." (I Thess. 4:16) All three of the terms used in this prophecy-the "shout," the "voice," and the "trumpet"-are symbolic of that which is brought about in the earth as a result of the foretold increase of knowledge and are quite in keeping with the general teaching of the Scriptures that the Master actually returns and is present in the earth for a period of time as a "thief in the night."

Certainly a thief does not literally shout as he enters a home, nor does he speak with a booming voice, nor blow a trumpet, as some have erroneously supposed Jesus would do when, allegedly, he would come down out of the sky as a human in full view of all the people of the earth. But when we think of these statements from a symbolic standpoint, all is clear. The Greek word translated "shout" carries the thought of incitement or encouragement to action, a command. Undoubtedly the reference is to the incitement or encouragement of the people throughout the world to assert their rights, as humans, to rise up in rebellion against the tyrannies of the past which held them as slaves to overlords and robbed them of their just share of earth's bounties.

This has been one of the results of the prophetic increase of knowledge, the brightshining of the Master's presence. The shout is today going up from millions of individuals within nations, as well as by downtrodden nations which in the past have been exploited by power. The concessions being obtained from earthly governments as a result of this shout will not satisfy the demands of the awakened masses of the earth, but in all that is happening along this line there is to be seen the preparation for kingdom blessings.

Small nations, too, which formerly have been outwardly willing to contribute their resources to enrich an empire

while they suffered poverty, are demanding the privilege of a free existence in order that they might control their own resources, and in many instances they have already obtained this concession. Already these are realizing that the obtaining of their liberty does not always result in the blessings they had hoped for; but the shout is being heard, and in due time Christ-together with his faithful followers reigning with him-will bless them with peace and security, for the promise is that "the desire of all nations shall come." -Hag. 2:7

The "voice of the archangel" symbolizes from another standpoint what is being accomplished by the brightshining now coming out of the east and shining even unto the west. There is only one Archangel referred to in the Bible, and his name is Michael. (Jude 9) This is also the name given to Jesus in connection with the early phase of his second presence in the earth. Daniel's prophecy refers to this, declaring that "at that time" Michael would "stand up" and that the result would be a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation."-Dan. 12:1

The title "Michael" means one who speaks for, or represents, God. So his standing up would indicate the exercise of divine authority and the fact that a "time of trouble" follows shows that this power is exercised for the overthrow of humanly constituted rulership in the earth.

The prophecies further associate the term "voice" with this overthrow of the nations and kingdoms of the world. Concerning this, Psalm 46:6 reads, "The heathen [nations] raged, the kingdoms were moved: he [God] uttered his voice, the earth melted." Following this declaration concerning the overthrow of earth's governments, the prophet declares, "Come, behold the works of the Lord [Jehovah], what desolations he hath made in the earth." (Ps. 46:8) These desolations are designed to prepare the way for Christ's kingdom; for the next two verses read: "He [God] maketh wars to cease unto the

end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

Terrible things, therefore-yet preparing the way for Christ's kingdom-result from the voice of God and the voice of the Archangel. These, of course, are not literal voices, nor are the forces which destroy the kingdoms of this world miraculous upheavals of nature. The prophecies generally indicate that this work will be done by the nations themselves in a great and final struggle to gain world supremacy. We are told that God will turn every man's sword against his brother, that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."-Matt. 24:7

Another prophecy portrays the Lord coming with a great "army," before which the "earth shall quake" and the "heavens shall tremble." The Prophet Joel states that this occurs in the "day of the Lord [Jehovah]," when through his Arm he executeth his word; that is, when the words of the prophecies concerning the overthrow of the kingdoms of this world, preparatory to the establishment of his kingdom, are being fulfilled. "The Lord [Jehovah] shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great," declares the prophet.-Joel 2:1-11

Turning from symbolism to reality, it is not difficult to see the fulfillment of this prophecy in the wild clamor of the peoples and nations of earth, as they relentlessly press for their rights to the point that civilization itself is being destroyed. The great army of the Lord probably embraces all the discontented of the earth who have been stirred up by the increase of knowledge to start on the march for freedom. Both the "heavens" and the "earth" crumble before them; that is, both the religious and the civil elements of the pre-1914 world are being destroyed, for such is the great power of "the voice of the Archangel," Jehovah's Arm.

Paul describes another manifestation of the Lord's return as "the trump of God." The trump, or trumpet, is

used much in the prophecies to symbolize the proclamation of a message, the sounding forth of information concerning impending and developing events. How appropriate it is, therefore, that one of the symbols used by Paul to describe the effects of Christ's second presence should be "the trump of God."

Christ's first visit to earth was for the purpose of redeeming Adam and his race from death, and he returns as the great Emancipator, or Restorer, of mankind. It is appropriate, therefore, that one of the facets of the prophetic increase of knowledge in this time of the Lord's presence should pertain to God's plan for blessing the people, not only with peace and security, but also with health and everlasting life. It is this that is symbolized by "the trump of God."

For many years past a definite message of this nature has been proclaimed throughout the civilized world. By millions of books, pamphlets, sermons in thousands of newspapers, motion pictures, the radio, and television the people have been told that the messianic kingdom is at the door and will result in the restoration of the human race to its lost dominion and to everlasting life on the earth. Churchianity has scorned this message, while continuing to cooperate with the kingdoms of this world in an effort to establish an era of peace and righteousness through human efforts.

The turmoil of the people resulting from the prophetic increase of knowledge is a necessary prerequisite to the blessings of the messianic kingdom which are to follow. Christ, the new King of earth, and his glorified faithful followers associated with him, will not use present humanly constituted and imperfect governments and institutions as channels through which to dispense the blessings of life and happiness promised in the Word of God; hence these must be set aside to make way for the establishment of the Lord's kingdom, which will take their place.

The miracle of Jesus' resurrection from death is an assurance that divine power is capable of raising all the dead in order to bring the promises of God to realization. (Acts 17:31) The first to be awakened from the sleep of death are those who qualify, through faithfulness in following the Master's example of sacrifice in the service of God and on behalf of others, to live and reign with him in the spiritual, or invisible heavenly, phase of the millennial kingdom. The awakening of these from death and their exaltation to glory, honor, and immortality is described in the Scriptures as "the first resurrection." And of those who come forth from death in "the first resurrection" the Scriptures declare that they live and reign with Christ "a thousand years."-Rev. 2:4,6

The resurrection of Christ's true followers in the first resurrection is but preliminary to the resurrection of all others who have died; for, as the Scriptures declare, there is to be a "resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." (Acts 24:15) The Apostle Paul declares that it is the will of God that all shall be saved (that is, from death) and given a knowledge of the truth concerning the loving provision made for them through the redemptive work of Christ.-1 Tim. 2:4-6

This will be accomplished during the thousand-year reign of Christ and his church, which is near. It will be then that humanity will be enlightened concerning the true and loving God. Thus the brightshining of the Master's presence will continue and increase throughout the millennial age, dispelling every vestige of superstition concerning the false gods of the creeds and of the heathen, and enlightening all concerning the true God of the Bible. Then will be fulfilled the statement that Christ is that "true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1 :9) The enlightenment itself will not guarantee everlasting life; for only those who accept the light

and order their lives in keeping therewith will live forever: "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."-John 3:16

That life, for all except those who participate in the spiritual phase of the kingdom, will be on the earth; for since it was a human life that Adam forfeited, it will be human life that will be restored to him and to his children. This is why the Apostle Peter so appropriately referred to the blessings which will be given to the people during the Millennium as "restitution."-Acts 3:19-21

But Peter emphasized that the blessings of restitution will be for those only who "hear" and obey. "It shall come to pass," he says, "that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:23) But the encouraging thing to know is that all will be enlightened with the truth concerning God's plan of salvation during this ultimate aspect of the brightshining of the Master's presence, and thus they will be given an opportunity to obey intelligently and, through obedience, to live forever. In speaking of that glorious time when divine favor will thus be manifested to mankind, the Apostle Paul declares: "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"-1 Cor. 15:54,55

CHAPTER VIII

"WITH A MIGHTY HAND"

"As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead with you, saith the Lord. And I will cause you to come under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."

- Ezekiel 20:33-37

WHEN we think of God's rulership over a people, we usually have in our minds visions of peace and tranquillity; but in this prophecy we are told of a time when he would rule "with fury poured out." The time referred to is when the natural descendants of Abraham were being gathered from the nations whither they had been scattered, to be returned to their own land.

The prophecy likens this exit from the nations to the Exodus from Egypt. There, also, it was the Lord God who brought about the Exodus, but he worked through Moses, who has been looked upon since as the deliverer of the Israelites from Egypt. So again, at this end of the age, it is "the greater than Moses" whom the Lord uses to bring about the deliverance of his people from their bondage among the nations. If this prophecy is being fulfilled, we have irrefutable proof that Jehovah God through Jesus, the Arm of Jehovah, is taking a hand in the affairs of men and particularly

in his providences over his ancient people. This, in turn, would mean that the presence of Jesus, as the antitypical Moses, is an established fact.

Is it, then, the "due time" for the restoration of Israel to the Promised Land; and if so, is there any evidence that God's purposes for them in this respect are being fulfilled? One of the prophetic time measurements bearing on this aspect of the divine plan is referred to by Jesus in his great prophecy concerning the end of the age. He said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."-Luke 21:24

The word Jerusalem is here used by Jesus in the same sense that we today speak of Moscow, or London, or Washington, that is, as being representative of the nation. The Israelites were the principal inhabitants of Jerusalem-and indeed of all Palestine-when this prophecy was made; so the expression "trodden down" evidently has reference to the fact that they were not then a free people. At that time they were permitted to dwell in Palestine, but as a people subject to the Romans. They did not have governmental control of the land.

All the Master's teachings were based upon the Old Testament; hence his reference to the times of the Gentiles indicates that somewhere in the Old Testament these "times" are referred to, and there is every reason to believe that a prophecy recorded in the 26th chapter of Leviticus is the one Jesus had in mind. In this chapter we find mentioned certain punishments which would surely come upon the Israelites in the event of their disobedience to God's Law and then a reference to "seven times more" of chastisement if they did not then hearken unto, and obey, the Lord. This "seven times" of additional punishment is mentioned four times. (Lev. 26:18, 21, 24, 28) The Hebrew word here translated "*seven*" is **shibah**, which according to Dr. Strong means "(adverbially) *seven* times."

The punishments mentioned as coming upon Israel prior to the seven times are evidently references to their periods of captivity to the Assyrians, Moabites, Midianites, Philistines, and others. While these were not particularly of long duration, they extended over more than seven literal years; so we must conclude that the **shibah** (seven times) which were to be visited upon the rebellious nation as additional punishment are intended by the Lord to be figured as symbolic times of 360 years each, making a total of 2,520 years. In figuring prophetic times the Scriptures give us the divine measuring rod of one day signifying an entire year. The Jewish year, or "time," was 360 days. Figured on the basis of a year for a day, this would be 360 years, and seven such periods would therefore be, as we have said, 2,520 years.

Israel as a nation lost national independence and sovereignty over their land in the year 606 B.C. This was when their last king was overthrown and the people were taken into captivity in Babylon. To know when the times of the Gentiles were due to end, we need only to find out where 2,520 years from 606 B.C. would terminate. The year A.O. 1914 is that date.

Do the facts of history, together with current events, bear out the conclusion that the year 1914 was indeed such an important date in the outworking of the divine plan? It is obvious that at the close of the times of the Gentiles we should see a stirring among the Jewish people, looking toward their re-establishment as a nation, and this we most certainly do find. Even previous to that, and as though the Lord God was awakening them to the importance of the hour, Zionism was born, although prior to 1914 it made little progress in the way of reestablishing the Israelites in the Promised Land. Indeed, for the most part, the Jews themselves turned a deaf ear to Zionism and the idea of returning to Palestine. But how different have been developments since 1914!

It was World War I, which began in 1914, that gave Zionism its real opportunity, for by that war the Holy Land was freed from the controlling hand of the Turks. Then the League of Nations sponsored the cause of the Jewish homeland. Through a mandate implementing the Balfour Declaration concerning the right of the Israelites to the land of Palestine and their right to become an independent nation in that land, the Gentile nations for the first time since 606 B.C. officially ceased to tread down that people, denying them the right to an independent national existence.

True, nothing was done by the League of Nations to enforce that mandate, and the situation drifted along for thirty years before the United Nations tried to make it possible for the hope of Israel to come true. To be sure, it was a far cry from that first official act of the League of Nations acknowledging the right of the Jewish people to their independence to the actual and full establishment of the people in the land which God gave to their fathers; but it was a turning point in his dealings with them, and a turning point so definitely marked that there is no escaping the conclusion that the times of the Gentiles did then run out. In fact, long years before 1914, the birth of the Zionist movement marked the first beginnings of the return of divine favor to the Israelites.

Some may argue that the times of the Gentiles could not have ended in 1914 for the reason that the Jews have been more bitterly persecuted since that date than ever before. But this view fails to take into consideration another group of prophecies which indicate that the end of their national bondage to Gentile nations and the time for their return to Palestine would be marked by great distress. The prophecies tell us that these final persecutions would come upon them to "cause" them to return to their own land and would be peculiar to the time when the Lord would "bring again" their captivity.-Jer. 30:3, 11

The Prophet Jeremiah tells us that the Lord (Jehovah) would send "fishers" and "hunters" among his people to induce them to return to the Promised Land. (Jer. 16:14-16) From these prophecies it is clear that the turning point of time from national captivity to national freedom from the Gentile yoke would not at once make an end of all trouble for the Jews.

The argument might be raised by some that if this were God's due time for Israel to return to the Promised Land they would be permitted to enter the land without restrictions. However, Joel 3:1, 2 reveals that the time for the return of Israel's captivity would be marked by a warlike gathering of Gentile nations and that it would be necessary for the Lord to plead with these nations concerning his people and concerning the land which he promised to them. The events of our generation are in clear fulfillment of this prophecy; hence they furnish additional evidence that we are living in the due time for God to "bring again" the captivity of his ancient people.

One of the most significant prophecies bearing on this matter is Ezekiel 20:32-38. The text at the head of this chapter is a part of this prophecy. It tells us that the Lord God would rule over his people in fury in order to gather them from the countries in which they were domiciled and return them to their own land. The 32nd verse gives one reason this furious rulership over them would be necessary. It reads, "And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, we will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone." Here the desire of the Jews to become assimilated by the nations in which they dwelt is described. This was the attitude of many Jews, particularly in Europe until, under the terroristic rule of the Nazis, they began to be uprooted and made outcasts.

The Lord God prophesied, "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all"; that is, "I will not permit you to

become as the nations in which you are dwelling"; for "as I live, ... surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face, like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord."

What a graphic picture this is of the reality of Israel's situation today! Large numbers of them have been brought out of the countries where they were held in bondage and, geographically speaking, are in the Promised Land, but actually it is not yet a land of peace and tranquillity; but a wilderness-as menacing as was the wilderness through which their forefathers passed on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land so many centuries ago.

They are ringed by hostile enemies threatening to destroy their nation, and they share with all nations the distress which is upon mankind today. Essentially all the problems of the world today are to be found in Israel, and they are as incapable of solving them as are the other nations. They have the racial problem, the narcotics problem, the problem of widespread immorality, drunkenness, ever-increasing crime, burdensome taxation-the whole list-and the hearts of the people are filled with fear just as in all other parts of the world.

Yes, symbolically speaking, the Jews are still on their wilderness journey. God's rulership of "fury" has not given them peace and tranquillity. It is for the purpose of preparing the people for the blessings of the messianic kingdom to follow. Ezekiel's prophecy further reads, "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

The expression "the bond of the covenant" is evidently a reference to the promised New Covenant, through the arrangements of which God's law will be written in the hearts of the people, and they will be given hearts of flesh instead of stone. (Jer. 31:31-34) The Lord's rulership of fury is designed to bring the Israelites to the point where they will be given an opportunity to enter into this wonderful covenant.

When God's plan progresses to this point, the faithful followers of the Master during the present age, brought forth from the dead in the first resurrection, will be living and reigning with him "as priests and as kings." The rulership of fury will have served its purpose, and then there will be established in Israel and throughout the world a wonderful era of peace and health, and all will be given an opportunity to gain everlasting life, the provision for which was made by the sacrificial death of Jesus.

The final scene of the great deliverance of Israel and the introduction of the people to the opportunity of being blessed under the promised New Covenant will not be until the close of Armageddon. Prophecies concerning this are recorded in Ezekiel 38 and 39, and also in Zechariah 14:2, 3,16-21. Ezekiel's prophecy tells of powerful armies coming against Jerusalem-armies which cover the land like a cloud-and it tells that the Lord God (by his Arm, Jesus Christ) will destroy them. As a result of this signal victory over the enemies of Israel, the eyes of the nations will be opened to behold God's glory.

Jehovah ruled over ancient Israel through David, Solomon, and others, Zedekiah being the last. When Zedekiah was overthrown, the Lord God, through the Prophet Ezekiel, declared: "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown **It** shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him." The One "whose right it is" is Jesus. The Lord's rulership of fury over Israel is through Jesus, which

means that he is indeed present. One of the titles given to him in order to call attention to this relationship to the Creator is that of Michael, meaning "who is like God," or one who represents 'God.

In Daniel 12:1 this title is used, and here we are told that when Michael stands up to rule there is "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." This harmonizes with the statement that God rules in his fury. It is well to note that this reign of fury is not merely for the purpose of getting Israel back into the Promised Land in readiness for the blessings of the new kingdom; but also for the destruction of the Gentile nations, those nations which were permitted to hold sway in the earth during the long period of the times of the Gentiles.

Just as the end of the times of the Gentiles in 1914 marked the beginning of outstanding events pertaining to Israel, so it did also with respect to the Gentile nations, particularly the nations of Europe-the old Roman world. As we have noted, the times of the Gentiles were to continue "until He come whose right it is." During this "until" period God has had no kingdom on earth, but beginning with the overthrow of Israel's last king he did give a certain authorization to Gentile nations to rule during the interim period.

This arrangement was outlined to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to whom the Prophet Daniel said, "Where-soever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he [God] given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all." (Dan. 2:38) Daniel did not say that God would rule over men through Nebuchadnezzar; hence this heathen king did not sit on the throne of the Lord as did the kings of Israel. Gentile dominion, has not, therefore, been a divinely sponsored and directed. rule but merely a divinely permitted one. It has been a human rulership, based simply and wholly upon the wisdom of fallen and selfish men.

The symbol of this rulership was the human-like image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream. Its head of gold, according to Daniel, represented the rulership of Babylon. (Dan. 2:38) This image also pictured-by its silver, brass, and iron-Babylon's successors-Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. What was said of Babylon became true of each of these in its turn; namely, that the God of heaven gave them a kingdom. It was in the days of Rome when the Apostle Paul wrote, "The powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom. 13:1) The Diaglott translation of this statement reads "arranged under God." Israel lost her freedom and became a vassal nation to Babylon, and this servitude continued under Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. No independence could be expected for Israel until He came "whose right it is."

Daniel's interpretation of the Gentile image limits its application to the four empires mentioned above. It includes other nations only in so far as they have come under the influence of these four. The Roman phase of the times of the Gentiles was represented by the legs of iron and, in the closing days, by the feet and toes of the image. Thus the symbolism runs true to form, for Rome was not succeeded by another empire, but was divided into the various states of Europe. These continued to exist and to be governed by hereditary ruling houses, which claimed divine authority, until they were overthrown as a result of World War I.

The prophecy tells of a "stone" which was cut out of the mountain "without hands" and states that this stone smote the image on its feet, causing it to fall. We quote: "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces **together**, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain [kingdom], and filled the whole earth."-Dan. 2:35

It is important to notice in this prophecy that that which is represented by the gold, silver, brass, and iron of the image is said to be broken "together." Each of the first three empires involved in this image picture fell as a world power when succeeded by the other, but there was something common to them all which was to fall together. What was it?

The answer is found in verse 38, where the prophet says, "And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven hath he [God] given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." Here then, is the one thing which was common to them all-God had given them dominion.

Babylon as a nation existed prior to the time when this image picture began to apply, but it was not the head of gold until God authorized its dominion. The same thing is true of the nations represented by the silver, brass, and the iron of the image. What the image represented, then, was a divine lease of power, or dominion, and it was this, that came to an end **together** at the termination of the times of the Gentiles. While the governments of the nations of the old Roman World represented in this image have nearly all been overthrown in a revolutionary phase of world destruction since 1914, the falling of the image does not represent the destruction of nations so much as it does the fact that from 1914 onward they no longer rule under "the times of the Gentiles" authorization but have been in a period of overthrow and disintegration, which will continue until the last vestige of Gentile authority in the earth is destroyed.

In the prophecy of Daniel 7:12, the same four Gentile empires are depicted as beasts, and concerning the first three we read, "They had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." This proves that the withdrawal of the right to rule does not

necessarily imply the immediate destruction of the nations which formerly held that right. The God-given dominion exercised by Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece was "taken away" from each in turn as it was passed on to the other. Finally Rome became the successor to this dominion. But when the time came for Rome to relinquish it, it means also that the due time had come for the rightful King of earth to take over; hence the dominion was not only to be taken away from Rome, but it was to cease altogether, and the divided empire through which it functioned was to be destroyed.

Noting that Nebuchadnezzar's image depicting Gentile rulership represented especially that the God of heaven had given these particular Gentile powers a dominion, it is most significant to realize that "the divine right of kings" viewpoint has today almost completely disappeared as an active governmental philosophy among the nations. As we have seen, the Gentile governments of the divided Roman Empire which held to this ideology have themselves nearly all been destroyed, and in their places are other forms of government. Church-state rulership has gone, the divine right of hereditary ruling houses is past, and sooner or later the presently constituted authorities of earth will come to grips in another struggle which will leave the whole earth a shambles and the people in virtual anarchy.

Thus seen, whether we look at the experiences of the Jews since 1914 and the furious rulership of the Lord by which they have been moved irresistibly into Palestine, or whether we view the undeniable changes occurring in Gentile rulership since that time, we cannot question the proof that the times of the Gentiles have ended. Seemingly, there is no escaping the truth established by these two lines of evidence.

True, kingdom blessings of peace and joy and life are not yet reaching the people, for we are still in the fury

phase of the rulership. The stone first smites the image and destroys it, and then the kingdom grows until it becomes a great "mountain" which fills the whole earth. Following the complete destruction of the symbolic image, the resurrected faithful followers of the Master, his church, will be associated with him as priests and kings; and it will be through the reign of these, as the faith seed of Abraham, that the promised blessings of health and life will reach the people. The reign of fury will then be over.-Rev. 20:4,6

No one can be happy about the trouble incident to the overthrow of a social order, but we can be glad for the assurance that the blessings of the messianic kingdom are so near. It is with sympathy that we view the experiences through which the Israelites have passed, and are still passing, in connection with their reestablishment in the Holy Land; but we can be happy that there is a divine purpose in their being returned there. That purpose is that they should be the first upon whom the blessings of the kingdom will be poured. And let us rejoice that these blessings, beginning with restored Israel, will ultimately be extended to all nations, for of "the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."-Isa. 9:7

CHAPTER IX

"NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH"

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

-II Peter 3:13

THERE is a depth of meaning in Peter's word "nevertheless," as used in the above text, and in his blessed assurance that there are to be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Through the chapter preceding this text, the apostle has been both positive and graphic in his explanation that among the signs of the presence of Christ would be the dissolution of man's selfish social order described as "the heavens and the earth, which are now." (II Pet. 3:7) These, he declares, "shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," all of which occurs in "the day of the Lord [Jehovah]." -11 Pet. 3:10

It is a dark picture of trouble and distress through which the nations were to pass, and little wonder that some might be inclined to doubt that such events could in any manner be evidences of the presence of a righteous King. Peter anticipates this objection and tells us that in the "last days" some would say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."-11 Pet. 3:4

The true thought of Peter's words in this text is lost through mistranslation. According to the Greek text, what he really said was, "Where is the evidence of his presence, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were." To the "fathers" of Israel, through the holy prophets, God had made wonderful promises concerning the blessings which would come to the world through the King

and Messiah whom he would send. It was Peter himself who, in summing up the glorious meaning of the prophetic testimony to the fathers, explained that following the return of Christ, during his second presence, there would be "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." -Acts 3:19-21

Yes, since the world began, or "the beginning of the creation," (II Pet. 3:4) the fathers had been given to understand that the coming of the Messiah to establish a kingdom would mean joy and health and everlasting life. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end," the Prophet Isaiah had written. (Isa. 9:6, 7) Again, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." (Isa. 25:8) The Prophet Isaiah and the Prophet Micah both foretold that the nations would "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks," and that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."-Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:1-4

From one standpoint or another, each of the prophets of old had described the life-giving blessings which would be showered upon the people when Christ, the righteous King of earth, returned to "have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." (Ps. 72:8) But Peter, who had the privilege of sitting at Jesus' feet and learning from him, and who in addition was inspired by the Holy Spirit as a prophet and thus able to set these great truths forth in their proper sequence, recognized that before the blessings of Christ's kingdom could flow out to the people, the "kingdoms of this world" must be destroyed.-Rev. 11:15

With this thought in mind, and in answering the question, "Where is the evidence of His presence?" Peter first reminds us of an illustration which he heard Jesus use

when he answered the disciples' question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming [presence], and of the end of the world?" In answering this question Jesus compared his presence at the end of the age with "the days of Noah." (Matt. 24:37-39) In the days of Noah the people were not aware of the impending catastrophe of the Flood; but it came and wrought destruction upon the symbolic heavens and earth which existed at that time. Thus that world, or **kosmos**, was brought to an end.

Now, in a very similar manner, as explained by Peter, the present evil world comes to an end in a relatively brief period of time referred to in the Scriptures as "the day of the Lord [Jehovah]." Just as the days of Noah began prior to the Flood, and he was present preparing for the impending catastrophe, so the first years of Christ's presence precede the destruction of "the heavens and earth, which are now." (II Pet. 3:7) It is within the day of the Lord [Jehovah]-not prior thereto-that the foretold distress upon the nations, leading to their complete and final overthrow, comes upon them. They pass away "with a great noise," the elements "melt with fervent heat," and "the works that are therein" are "burned up," in "the day of the Lord." (11 Pet. 3:10) With the selfish institutions of this present evil world out of the **way**, then will come the establishment of Christ's kingdom, evidenced by the blessings which flow out from it for the enlightenment and healing of the people.

And it is in keeping with the purpose of Christ's kingdom that God's power be used for the destruction of this present evil world; for while Christ's kingdom will be an instrument of blessing to mankind, his presence first results in the destruction of the enemies of God and of righteousness. The Apostle Paul wrote that the last enemy to be destroyed by Christ's reign is death, and evidently among the first enemies destroyed in preparation for his reign are

the kingdoms of this world. (I Cor. 15:25,26; Ps. 2:8,9) Because of this, his presence now causes all the tribes of the earth to mourn rather than to rejoice, as they will do later on. (Matt. 24:30) Thus Peter confirms the correct sequence of events associated with Christ's presence in his explanation that it causes the passing away of the heavens and the earth which are now.

Having explained this point, making it as definite as possible, Peter then seemingly reverts to the question, "Where is the evidence of His presence?" and gives assurance that he has not at all overlooked the ultimate purpose of the Lord's return, that is, the restoration of the human race to life. We quote, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Peter looked for this, and we look for it, because it is one of the things which God promised to the fathers through his holy prophets. While we look for the new heavens and new earth we realize, as explained by Peter, that before they can be established, a part of the work of the returned Lord is to set aside the wicked heavens and earth which compose this present evil world.-Gal. 1:4

The symbolic heavens and earth, over which Satan is the supreme ruler, are rapidly passing away; and to the thoughtful mind this focuses interest more than ever on the hope centered in God's promise to create new heavens and a new earth. When Peter referred to this promise of God he evidently had in mind the one which is recorded in Isaiah 65:17-25. Turning to this wonderful chapter we read:

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more

thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom], saith the Lord."

No amount of explaining could make this wonderful promise of God concerning blessings which will come to the people under the rulership of the new heavens and new earth more complete or realistic. In keeping with the figurative language of the East, the hope of blessing to come is set forth in word pictures, but there is no escaping the glorious meaning of the symbols used. In plain phrase Isaiah is telling us that when Christ is King there will be health and everlasting life for all the obedient, that all will be given at least a hundred years of trial, and if then they die because they are incorrigible sinners, they will be but babes in comparison to the lasting life which they might have enjoyed. There is building and planting, and an economic security attached to the labor of the people that is dreamed of today, but seldom, if ever, experienced. There is peace and tranquillity among all.

These are the evidences which, just beyond the present time of distress, will convince the whole world that Christ

is indeed reigning; and they will acclaim him as the mighty ruler of that time. It will be then that Christ will be revealed "in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isa. 25:6-9; 52:10) What a prospect!

And what are the new heavens and new earth which the Lord has thus promised to create? They are the governmental arrangements of Christ's kingdom. In the prophecy concerning their creation another name is given, namely, "Jerusalem"- "Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." (Isa. 65:17, 18) The Apostle John, on the Isle of Patmos, was given various visions of the new kingdom arrangements, and says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," and also says he "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." -Rev. 21:1, 2

In verses 9 and 10 of this chapter, John identifies the "new Jerusalem" and "the bride, the Lamb's wife." This is the key to the understanding of the symbol. Jesus is to be the great King in that kingdom of blessing; and he is to reign with and through his church, who, in the first resurrection, becomes his bride. Jerusalem of old was the capital of Israel, where kings had their headquarters, their "throne." So the Lord uses these circumstances as a picture of the kingdom of Christ and calls it the "new Jerusalem." And this new Jerusalem is also, as we have seen, the new heaven and the new earth which God has promised, in other words, the kingdom of Christ and his associates, his "bride."

The combined symbol of heaven and earth indicates what is otherwise plainly taught in the Scriptures; namely, that the kingdom of Christ will be of two parts, the spiritual and the human-the invisible and the visible. Jesus, the divine King, and his church together with him, will be the spiritual part of that kingdom of blessing, and the resurrected Old Testament Worthies will be their human rep-

representatives. The Scriptures also speak of "a great multitude" who will stand before the throne and "serve him day and night in his temple." (Ps. 45:14; Rev. 7:9, 13-15) This, briefly, is the organizational arrangement of the symbolic new heavens and new earth. And it is because God has promised to complete the creation of this arrangement for the blessing of all nations that we can now rejoice to realize that Satan's empire is crumbling.

All the promises of God which reflect his goodwill toward the dying race will be fulfilled as a result of his creation of the new heaven and new earth. His promises of a heavenly inheritance for the faithful followers of the Master will have their fruition in the exaltation of the church to "glory, and honor, and immortality," to "live and reign with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. 20:4, 6) And how much better is this true conception of God's purpose in the church than the idea so long entertained by many that God is taking Christians to heaven when they die merely that they might be "saved"! Now we see that he calls all true Christians for a purpose, the blessed purpose of being associated with Jesus in his kingdom, through which the people of earth are to be given life, health, and enduring peace and happiness.

God's promises to the Ancients will also then be fulfilled. Abraham and his natural descendants will have their portion in the Land of Promise. The Worthies of those past ages will be associated with the kingdom as its human representatives. They did not expect more than this. They understood nothing concerning the divine plan for a spiritual phase of the messianic kingdom. Even the prophets did not foresee this. Jesus said of the last of the prophets, John the Baptist, that although among those born of women there had not risen a greater than John, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven (that is, in the spiritual phase of the kingdom) would be greater than he. John will be one

of the princes in the human phase of the kingdom, but he will not have a heavenly reward, and he will not reign with Jesus as a king.

In the new heavens and new earth God's promises to Abraham will have their fulfillment-those promises that all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Jesus and his church constitute the faith seed of Abraham, which will be the channel of blessing to mankind in the kingdom, and how rich and far-reaching those blessings will be! They are beautifully illustrated in Revelation 22:1, 2, under the symbol of a "river of water of life" which emanates from "the throne of God and of the Lamb." On either side of this symbolic river are the trees of life with their abundant supply of life-giving fruit, "and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." How glad we should be that the people of all nations-starving, oppressed, bleeding, and dying-are to be healed. Verily this will be the "blessing of all the families of the earth"!

The promise of God through Jacob that out of Judah would come one called "Shiloh"-peacemaker-and that unto him would the gathering of the people be, will find its glorious fulfillment in the messianic kingdom; for King Jesus will be that Shiloh, and unto him, and under his banner of love and peace, the people will be gathered and blessed. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his day shall the righteous flourish." "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust." "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." All of these heart-cheering promises will be fulfilled in the new heaven and new earth.-Ps. 72:6,7,9,11

Then, too, will be the time when every man will dwell under his vine and fig tree and when swords shall be made

into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks. It will be then that the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then also will come the awakening of all the dead by the same infinite power of the Creator who gave life in the first place. No one, either of the living or of the dead, will be left out of the worldwide circle of people who will then have an opportunity of being blessed with everlasting life in keeping with the promises God gave through the prophets, made clear through Christ and the apostles, and ratified by the blood of the Redeemer.

But it will be necessary to obey divine law in order to live forever. The Apostle Peter emphasizes this. After telling us that with the return of Christ there will be "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," he adds, "And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."-Acts 3:19-23

But there are assurances that the majority of people of all nations will probably be glad to accept the provisions of divine love, as they will then be proffered, and obey the laws of earth's new King. Jesus indicated that the nation of Israel, although they rejected him at his first advent, will yet say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The Prophet Micah wrote that "many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord, ... and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."-Micah 4:2

What could be more appropriate for any of us, even now, than to hail our King, the King of the new age-King Jesus? If we are endeavoring to walk in his footsteps of sacrifice, inspired by the hope of reigning with him, let us give the greater diligence to make our calling and election sure. If we are being drawn by divine love and are impelled

to give ourselves to the Lord in full devotion to do his will, we should not tarry. There is still time to run for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

In any event, if the beauties of the divine plan and the fact that the kingdom of Christ is near have inspired us to love the Lord more than we have in the past, let us show our love by an earnest endeavor to do his will, to walk humbly before him, and to sound forth his praises. Knowing, as we should, that we are living in the time of his presence, let us be among the first to welcome the new King and be ready to yield ourselves in full obedience to his kingdom laws of justice and righteousness.