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“Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men.”

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”—Luke 2:8-14.

THE angel's message at the time of the birth of Jesus as the babe of Bethlehem is most inspiring, being helpful and encouraging at all seasons of the year, but especially so at the Christmas season. The words of verse 10 in this 2nd chapter of Luke read—“The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which **shall be to all people.**” Meditating on these words we realize that they mean something really outstanding, for the “all people” mentioned in the angel's message means **all people who have ever lived on this earth.** This assurance is almost beyond our comprehension until we realize that what the Lord promises in His Word He is abundantly able to perform, in due time.

Further, the message in verse 14 is of the utmost importance also, because it gives assurance that a time is coming when there will be **“on earth peace, good will toward men.”** Both these messages, coming from God's holy angels, at the birth of God's dear Son to be the Saviour of the world could not have greater or higher qualifications for the sureness of their fulfilment, because those angels spoke for God.

Examining other Scriptures which also speak for God, through earthly servants, we find that the promised “peace on earth” has never been experienced amongst the human family since Adam disobeyed God and brought the sentence of death upon himself and all mankind who were condemned in him. This is clearly stated in Rom. 5:12—“Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

How different, however, is the prospect for all mankind revealed in the wonderful prophecy of Isa. 9:6, 7—“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” This prophecy given by Isaiah at least 700 years prior to the birth of Jesus is surely a wonderful message of assurance that the Saviour would come and establish peace on earth, in due time. The difficulty with many people is that almost 2,000 years have passed since Jesus came, and instead of peace on earth, good will toward men, wars and other world-wide troubles have increased. Indeed, to such a pitch have world conditions developed today, that the greatest

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men on earth fear for the complete destruction of the human family with such weapons of annihilation that are available today.

When Jesus was on earth at His first advent He made no claim that His Kingdom of Peace could be expected at that time, and this is also strange to many people. In John 18:36 we read Jesus' reply to Pilate—"My kingdom is not of this world." The word "world" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word "kosmos", meaning "order of things." So Christ's kingdom would not be established during this "present evil world." We may reason that if our Lord had set up His kingdom at His first advent, He could have prevented the development of such terrible conditions we see worldwide today. That may have been so, but supposing the Lord's power had been operating throughout the world, and wars had not developed, and nations had not invented such weapons of destruction that are so prevalent today, would "peace on earth, good will toward men" have been possible while all members of the human family were growing old and passing away in death, even if there were no dread diseases to cause pain and suffering? It will be admitted readily that there can be **no real peace on earth** in the midst of death amongst the human family.

Therefore, God's promise, through His angels at the birth of Jesus, to establish "peace on earth" was much more far reaching than the mere prevention of war, however desirable that may be. Yes, the promise of "peace on earth, good will toward men" when Jesus was born as the Saviour, Christ the Lord, meant the taking away of every hindrance to lasting peace and happiness for the human family, including the abolishing of the death sentence rightly imposed upon our first parents 4,000 years previously.

In Matt. 18:11 we read—"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost", and this includes the whole human family. The words of Jesus are also recorded—"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might receive it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to receive it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"—John 10:11, 17, 18.

The Psalmist gives us a good outline of God's compassion and love for His human creation, that prompted the sending of His only begotten Son to pay the penalty of death standing against all mankind, in the words of Psalms 102:19, 20—"For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord

behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." These human prisoners under the sentence of death, are also well described by the Apostle Paul—"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"—Rom. 8:22. However, the promise that God would "loose those that are appointed to death" is abundantly confirmed throughout the Old and New Testaments.

In Isa. 25:7-9, we have a beautiful description of the blessings of Christ's Kingdom operating throughout the world for the benefit of all the obedient in that day—"He will destroy in this mountain (kingdom) the face of the covering (death) cast over all people, and the veil (ignorance) that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (See also Isa. 2:2-4.)

In Psalms 72:17 we read—"His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." This surely will be the time when the message of the angels at the birth of Jesus will be fulfilled—"Peace on earth, good will toward men." However, it may be asked, Why did God allow about 2,000 years to pass from Jesus' birth before the promised peace should come to mankind? The answer is, for the special purpose in God's plan to select the Church, the Bride of Christ, to inherit the heavenly kingdom with Christ, and assist in establishing **lasting peace** throughout the earth, to God's praise. To accomplish the calling and developing of this class of followers of Jesus, the whole Gospel Age has been devoted and each one drawn of the Father to Jesus has been blessed with a measure of inward peace which our Lord exhibited so completely against all the contradiction of sinners against Himself. (See Heb. 12:1-3.)

Our Lord's legacy of peace has been a great blessing to all His true followers, as stated in John 14:27—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." This peace, comforting the hearts of God's people, comes from the indwelling of His holy spirit, but of course does not fulfil the promise of "peace on earth, good will toward men", which can come only with the setting up of Christ's Kingdom and His rule of righteousness throughout the earth, Satan of

course being bound that he deceives the nations no more at that time—Rev. 20:1-3.

While waiting for the kingdom the Lord's people realize what a privilege it is to have a part in the service of Christ, to be active in witnessing with the glad message which has been such a blessing to their own hearts. An important part of the Christian's armour is to have our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"—Eph. 6:15. In other words, to have one's heart prepared in meekness, humility, and devotedness to the Lord, and so be fitted to commend Christ's gospel of peace wherever there are hearing ears. The same thought is found in Paul's words in Rom. 10:15—"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Yes, indeed, what a favour to have been entrusted with the glad tidings of the gospel of peace, to be proclaimed at all suitable times now, and also assuring all who have ears to hear that the message from the angelic host is sure of fulfilment in the near future, with the establishment of Christ's kingdom—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Thoughts for the New Year

If clouds of trouble gather near,
Sometime throughout this coming year,
And things we prize should disappear,
We'll find no change in Jesus.

If foes surprise and lay us low,
And swell our hearts with pain and woe,
And friends, unheeding, onward go,
We'll find no change in Jesus.

If fortune turns from us away,
And poverty should come to stay,
And friends their shallow hearts betray,
We'll find no change in Jesus.

And so 'twill be until the end,
We'll always have a precious Friend,
Upon whose love we may depend:
We'll find no change in Jesus.

No change in Him, no change in Him:
All glory to His precious Name!
For us His love remains the same:
We'll find no change in Jesus.

—James Rowe.

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Binding the Strong Man

During our Lord's ministry on earth He performed many and varied miracles by the power of His heavenly Father to demonstrate that He was the true Messiah sent by God, as promised throughout the Old Testament.

One of these miracles is recorded in Matthew 12 from verse 22 as follows—"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." What a strange and foolish accusation by the Pharisees—to imply that our Lord needed and gained the power of Satan to cast out one of Satan's own demons from the afflicted man. But this erroneous statement was used to good purpose by Jesus when He replied—"If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? . . . But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you"—Matt. 12:26,28. The Diaglott gives a better rendering of verse 28—"If it be by Divine co-operation that I cast out demons, then God's Royal Majesty has unexpectedly appeared among you." Our Lord was speaking of Himself, and this and other miracles were proofs of His Messiahship.

In verse 29 Jesus went on to speak of the miracle by the power of God as being a binding of the strong man (Satan) in a limited sense to bring about the liberation of the man possessed by the demon. Our Lord was entering the strong man's house, so to speak, and spoiling the control of the demon over the possessed man. This demonstration of God's power in the hands of our Lord also pictured the time when Satan's house would be completely entered, and Satan will be fully bound throughout the kingdom of one thousand years. This is shown in Rev. 20:1-3, and the timing of Satan's binding is clearly revealed as being when "he should deceive the nations no more", which of course is not yet, but will be when Christ's kingdom is fully established in the earth.

The Family of God

"Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother"—Matt.12:50.

The incident during our Lord's ministry, as recorded in Matthew 12:46-50, is apt to be misunderstood. Jesus was busy talking to the people, no doubt about the wonderful kingdom message, when His mother and brethren approached, desiring to speak to Him. On being informed of their presence, He asked—"Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" Then He added the words of verse 50 stated above.

There can be no doubt that Jesus had the highest respect and love for His mother throughout His earthly life, and this incident does not detract from His love for her, even if she did not become one of His devoted followers. However, there is every likelihood that she did become a consecrated disciple of Jesus, even though this is not confirmed in the Bible. The meaning of our Lord's words would be that His disciples, drawn by His heavenly Father to Him, are truly members of the spiritual family of God here on earth, and would have a much closer relationship to Jesus than any human relative not consecrated to do the will of His Father.

In a recent study of these verses in Matthew, we were reminded that at no time did Jesus' mother seek to restrict His ministry in any way. She did not wish to selfishly control the life of her dear Son as some mothers and fathers are apt to do as their children grow up in the world today. A helpful case was mentioned of a Christian mother's attitude to her daughter who also became a true Christian, in that the mother always thought and spoke of her daughter as being a Sister in the Lord—on the same favoured basis as herself in God's spiritual family. Such is the honoured relationship of all true followers of the Master, as they use the titles of brother and sister in the household of God, quite apart from any human relationship, as the Apostle declared—"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one (one spirit): for which cause he (Christ) is not ashamed to call them brethren"—Heb.2:11.

"Sing, O daughter of Zion" — Zeph. 3:14.

Children of the Heavenly King!

As ye journey, sweetly sing;
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.

John Cennick.

Pilgrimage Ended

Another of our Australian Sisters in the Lord, the devoted wife of our Brother Martin of Adelaide, finished the pilgrim way on 9th October last. The following brief report is to hand from Adelaide.

Our dear Sister Martin was of a quiet nature and humble minded but had a deep love of the Lord, the Truth and people, especially the Lord's people. Taught by an earnest Christian mother, the late Sister Horner, her love of the Lord would have gone back to her earliest days.

Until frailties of age in recent years, our Sister regularly attended the Adelaide Class for upwards of forty years and was a frequent visitor at Melbourne Conventions. Her faith was steadfast notwithstanding some very difficult times. We have every confidence in our Sister having gained the Lord's approval, and by His grace having merited a part in His wonderful heavenly Kingdom, to which she looked forward. At this time our Brother Martin and Sister's son and his family are very forward in our prayers.

Reprint of "Hope" Booklet

A reprint of the helpful "Hope" booklet has been produced. This booklet was supplied to all "Peoples Paper" readers some time ago and has been duly appreciated. It is being advertised for the public, and all our brethren may procure supplies for general use, provided free through the Tract Fund.

Two other booklets were offered to the public in two magazines in September, and upwards of 300 requests have been received in recent times. We ask the Lord to bless His truth to all sincere people, as He sees good.

Melbourne Christmas Convention

The brethren of the Melbourne Class extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend their Annual Convention to be held this year (DV) on December 22nd, 23rd, 25th, and 26th, in the Masonic Hall, 12 Prospect Hill Rd., Camberwell. Further information from the Class Secretary—Mr. J.B. Hiam, 27 Redhill Avenue, Burwood East, Victoria, 3151.

Melbourne Class New Address

The Melbourne Class now meets in the Masonic Hall, 12 Prospect Hill Rd., Camberwell. Sunday services are at 11.30 a.m., and 2.30 p.m., to which all interested people are invited for Undenominational study of the Bible.

The Presence of The Lord

(Convention Address)

When studying our Lord's presence, we naturally turn to our Lord's words in Matt. 24:1-3. Quoting verse 3—"And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the world?" We know that the Diaglott gives a better rendering of the Greek text—"What will be the sign of thy presence, and the consummation of the age?" Young's Literal Translation Bible also uses the words "presence" and "age."

It is important for us to understand that the disciples were not asking for signs of His coming, but of His presence—signs of His parousia, which is the Greek word. In the 1959 edition of Rotherham's Bible, he states that he can see no reason why the Greek word parousia should not be uniformly translated presence in every place where it occurs. The word is taken from the Greek root para, which we can find in good English dictionaries, the meaning being given as side by side, or alongside, such as our word parallel. Young's concordance gives the meaning of parousia as being alongside or present, so it is good to have this evidence from a number of independent sources.

There are two occasions where the King James version has translated the word parousia as presence. One is Phil. 2:12—"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." In this case we see how presence is contrasted with absence. It seems that coming is not one of the meanings of this word.

Going back to Matt. 24, the questions asked by the disciples were no doubt providential and were really asked on behalf of their brethren who would be living at the time of our Lord's second presence at the end of the age.

It has been said that all the signs given by our Lord relating to the end of this age are really signs of His presence. We will not have time to go into them all, so will concentrate on those things that Jesus said were in fact signs of His presence.

First let us pose the question, Do we have a firm foundation for the doctrine of the secret, invisible presence of the Lord? After all, many Christians believe that at our Lord's second coming He will be seen by the whole world descending from heaven in a blaze of light. As we know, there are texts which would support this thought if taken literally. We need to be careful not to take symbolic passages literally,

or we will find it impossible to harmonize the Scriptures on the subject of our Lord's second presence.

It is important that we study carefully our Lord's reply to the question, What shall be the sign of thy presence? It is also important to remember what He did not say. For example, when a question was asked of Him that was based on error, He was quick to point it out—such as His words in Matt. 22:29 and Mark 12:24—"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." If the question concerning His presence had been an improper one, He would have said so, but in fact He proceeded to answer it at length, showing that the question was a legitimate one.

Let us go back to what He did say. Matt. 24:37-39 strongly supports the thought that there will be a time when our Lord is secretly present, quite unknown to the world. Young's Literal Translation Bible says—"And as the days of Noah—so shall be also the presence of the Son of man; for as they were in the days before the flood eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage till the day Noah entered into the ark and they did not know until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall be also the presence of the Son of man." The Diaglott also gives a similar translation.

There is a thought that "The Bible is its own interpreter." This is the case more than once with our Lord's prophecy. It is recorded in the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and on at least four occasions Luke interprets or enlarges upon the Matthew account. This particular passage is one such case. The accounts in Matthew and Luke are virtually the same, except for one point. Luke 17:26 reads—"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man", showing that "presence" is the correct meaning of the Greek word parousia. The word parousia does not occur in the Luke account at all; so parousia in the Matthew account, "the days of the Son of man", means the days when He is present, not the days of His coming.

The account says "the days of Noe", plural, meaning a period of time. This would be the time when the Ark was being built. It also says "the days of the Son of man", plural, again meaning a period of time. It is a period of time when our Lord is present quite unknown to the world; they go about their business as usual.

The passage in Luke 17:26-29 gives us convincing proof that our Lord is secretly present, but hidden or covered up, as it were. Verse 28 gives the same illustration again in respect of the days of Lot—they builded, planted and so on. Luke mentions the days of Lot as well as the days of Noe and the days of

the Son of man. During the days of Lot, Lot must have been present; likewise during the days of Noe, Noe must have been present. Would we not conclude, then, that during the days of the Son of man, the Son of man would be present?

Luke 17:29,30 reads—"But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Here we have a change from the plural to the singular—the day that Lot went out of Sodom, the day when the Son of man is revealed. During the antitypical days of Noe and Lot at the end of this age our Lord has been present, but not revealed to the world. Now we have a progression, the **day** when Lot went out of Sodom and it was destroyed. This was just one literal day. The antitype would be a very brief period of time right at the close of this age, a time still future. "It rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." This pictures the final phase of our fiery time of trouble, Armageddon. Apparently this will be the event that will reveal our Lord's presence to the world. It does not say—"Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man comes", but when He is revealed. He has already come long before, and has been present quite unknown to the world.

The Greek word translated "revealed" is very interesting. It is apokalupto, and has about the same meaning as apokalupsis, which is a word we often study in connection with our Lord's presence. Both Young's Concordance and Vine's Greek Dictionary give the meaning of apokalupto as "to uncover or unveil", with the thought of uncovering something that has previously been hidden by a cover, such as unveiling a statue or a plaque. A thing cannot be uncovered unless it is first present and covered. How well this fits our Lord's secret presence! Matt. 10:26 is a good example of the use of this word—"Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known." Several translations render this verse—"there is nothing covered up that will not be uncovered."

Our Lord is referred to as coming as a thief in Matt. 24:43 and other passages. This gives the thought of secretly, stealthily, unknown until the time of His revelation.

All these passages show us that the doctrine of our Lord's secret, invisible presence at the end of this Age is a Scriptural one.

The next question we ask is, Do we have signs to show that we are living in the time of His presence? In this regard we have one key

verse in Matt. 24:27—"For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the presence of the Son of man be." The King James translation reads "coming", but the word in the Greek is again parousia, or presence. In our Lord's reply to His disciples this is the first mention He made of His presence, so we must place a great deal of importance on it, since it is the answer to their question. Jesus is saying, in effect, You asked me for a sign of my presence; this is the sign, but I am giving it to you in symbolic language, and it is for you to study and work out the meaning.

There has been discussion from time to time as to whether "lightning" is the correct word to be used here, or whether it is the sun that is meant. The Greek word is "astrape", a word that has more than one meaning. Lightning is a correct translation, but it would be just as correct to translate it "bright shining", as it is in Luke 11:36, where the bright shining of a candle is referred to. "Sun" is not one of the meanings of this word, but it could well mean the bright shining that comes from the sun.

There is another Greek word for "Sun." The question has been asked, If "sun" is meant, why is the Greek word for "sun" not used here? Perhaps it is because the Lord wanted to emphasize the bright shining that comes from the sun—in other words, the rays of the sun rather than the sun itself. We can look up into the sky and see exactly where the sun is, but that was not the picture our Lord wanted to convey. Rather, He wanted His disciples to think of the bright shining from the sun bathing the whole earth all over, from one side to the other, and is not found in any one spot. We must also link this verse in with Matt. 24:26—"Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." Jesus is saying, it is no use going out to look for Me; there is just no place anywhere on earth where I can be found. My presence will not be a literal one like that; I will not be in any one spot. My presence will be manifest like the bright shining, from one side of the earth to the other. Perhaps our Lord used the term "bright shining" so as to leave the matter open, so that both illustrations could be drawn—the lightning and the sun. Whichever illustration we use, we get the same picture. For example, we have Psalm 77:18—"The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook." Then again, look at Psalm 97. Verse 1 begins—"The Lord reigneth." In verse 2—"Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Verse 4 is the key verse in this

passage—"His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled." There are several other interesting passages on lightning in the Old Testament, but this is sufficient to enable us to understand the meaning of Jesus' words. He is saying that the sign of His presence would be the enlightening of the world. It is generally thought our Lord's presence commenced toward the end of the 19th century; it is only since that time that the enlightening of the world has occurred. Before that time there was no electricity, electronics, radio, television, cars, planes and 101 other things we take for granted today.

If we take the illustration as being the rays of the sun, the thought is still the same, that of bringing light to a dark world and, in due time, life and healing. We are told in Mal. 4:2 that the sun of righteousness is to arise with healing in his wings. The Hebrew text contains the thought of a wing, as a covering or protection, and that is exactly what our Lord will be to the world when He commences His mediatorial reign—a covering, a protection, as Mediator between God and man. If we are faithful now, when the Kingdom reign commences we will be privileged to be a part of that Sun of righteousness and assist in the great restitution work. Our Lord makes this point clear in the parable of the wheat and tares—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear"—Matt. 13:43. The Apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 8:19 that this is the time the whole creation waits for; he says—"waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God", in other words, the time when they are to shine forth.

Our Lord's bright shining is really contained in the thought that He is the light of the world, a light to lighten the Gentiles, the true light that lighteneth every man—John 8:12, Luke 2:32 and John 1:9. During the Gospel age that light has been shining only on the followers of the Master, and even for them not as fully as it now does during our Lord's second presence.

Our Lord's presence is revealed to us in two ways; through the increase of knowledge to the world, and also through the increase of knowledge to the Church, God's true Church. Dan. 12:4 tells us—"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." There seems little doubt that Daniel's words refer to both the world and the Church; to the world in a scientific way, and to the Church in a spiritual sense, enlightenment on the features of God's plan. The world must await the kingdom age before being enlightened in this way.

Daniel indicates that this increase in knowledge is to take place at "the time of the end." Remembering the question that was asked our Lord—"What shall be the sign of thy presence and the end of the age", these two things tie in together. Our Lord is present at the end of the age. Dan. 12:4 says—"Shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end." So the words of the book are to be opened and made known at the end of the age, during our Lord's presence, as part of the general increase of light due on God's Word at that time. Also, the meaning seems to be that the running to and fro and the general increase in knowledge in the world all take place during the time of the end, which would mean the end of the age, the time of Christ's presence. The running to and fro only began in the full sense with the invention of the motor car and the aeroplane, and bearing in mind Daniel's prophecy, this makes it a good sign of our Lord's presence.

Turning again to our Lord's prophecy, Luke 17:24 is the counterpart of the verse we have been studying in Matt. 24:27 relating to our Lord's bright shining. This is the second occasion where Luke interprets the Matthew account. The verse reads—"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." If you wish, you could substitute in your minds "bright shining" for "lightning." The point is, the Matthew account says—"so shall the parousia of the Son of man be." Luke says—"so shall the Son of man be in his day." This shows again that "presence" is the correct meaning of parousia. Our Lord is not saying that just the moment of His coming is going to be accompanied by bright shining, but it is going to be a feature for the whole of His day, and His day is a very long day in the sense it is used here. I take it to cover the period from the start of our Lord's presence right through until the end of the Millennium. While the enlightening begins with our Lord's return, it is not fully accomplished until the close of the thousand years of His reign. This thought is brought out so beautifully in Zech. 14:6,7—"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark, but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." The verse preceding this passage ends with the words—"and the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee"; so there is no doubt that the day referred to is the Millennial day, and it will not be fully light until evening, the close of that day. Sometimes just a few words in the Scriptures can take a thousand years or more to be fulfilled.

I mentioned earlier that the bright shining of our Lord's presence was to bring additional illumination to the Scriptures. The increase in knowledge is not only in worldly matters, but on the Word of God also for those who have ears to hear. This is another of the signs that we are in fact told is a sign of our Lord's presence. We have the Master's words in Luke 12:37—"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." The main point to notice here is that this event occurs after our Lord returns, as the verse says "when he cometh", then He is to make them sit down to a good nourishing meal. It is suggested this meal consists of what we call today "present truth", a clear understanding of our heavenly Father's plans and purposes, an understanding of the exceeding great and precious promises that have been given to us and the glorious restitution blessings shortly to flow to all mankind. The hymn says—"It satisfies our longings as nothing else could do." The precious truths of God's Word are often represented as food. In Luke 4:4 Jesus said—

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Jesus uses the illustration of food again in John 4:32-34 in a slightly different sense, though the thought behind it is exactly the same. He said—"I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." There is a worldly expression that says virtually the same thing. If a man becomes very absorbed in some hobby or is building up a business that becomes an all-consuming interest, it is often said it is meat and drink to him. In just the same way, the study of God's Word and doing His will should be meat and drink to us, as it was to our Lord, who always delighted to do the Father's will.

Another sign of our Lord's presence is the harvest, which we cannot go into in detail now. In the explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares in Matt. 13:39, Jesus said—"The harvest is the end of the world (age)." Once again this ties in with the disciples' question—What will be the sign of thy presence and the end of the world (age). Have we seen the signs of the harvest, the separation of the wheat from the tares? If so, it means we are living at the end of the age, the time of our Lord's presence. The main signs of the harvest were probably back at the end of last century and early this century, when a great amount of separating work took place.

There is one statement in our Lord's prophecy from which we can receive great comfort and encouragement in Matt. 24:33. This is immediately after Jesus refers to the fig tree putting forth leaves, and He goes on to say—"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." What is meant? This is the third occasion where Luke interprets the Matthew account for us. We find this companion verse in Luke 21:31—"So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand". We have seen the signs, and what a joy it is to know that the message they convey to us is that the Kingdom is even at the doors. As it says in Luke 21:28—"When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." So then, we have reached the time when our prayer and the prayer of all true Christians down the centuries is about to be fulfilled—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

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