

SEVEN BIBLICAL SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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Contents

[THE SEVEN BIBLICAL SIGNS OF THE TIMES](#)

[OUR OBJECT IN SERVICE](#)

[IS THE END IN VIEW?](#)

[CHRISTIANS MAY DISCERN THE APPROACHING END](#)

[TWO PROPHETIC DAYS MUST BE DISTINGUISHED](#)

[REAL ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED](#)

[THE SEVEN MAJOR BIBLICAL SIGNS OF THE TIMES](#)

[I. THE JEWISH SIGN](#)

[II. THE GENTILE GOVERNMENT SIGN](#)

[III. THE JERUSALEM SIGN](#)

[IV. THE UNVEILED PROPHECY SIGN](#)

[V. THE MATERIAL EARTH SIGN](#)

[VI. THE APOSTACY SIGN](#)

[VII. THE COMMERCIAL SIGN](#)

[CONCLUSION](#)

THE SEVEN BIBLICAL SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Lord Jesus appointed one particular thing for Christians to do in this age, — the good news of His saving grace is to be preached to every creature. This ministry is not committed to His Church: it is

committed to the individuals who form His Church. Nor is it committed to the “clergy”: it is committed to every member in His blessed body. The undertaking has too long been considered the responsibility of an indefinite combination of people, with the resulting woeful effect that what is everybody’s business is nobody’s business. Fond hopes have been entertained that if each individual did a little, the corporate whole would somehow discharge its commission. On the contrary, we are not even sent out two by two. In every particular it is a personal obligation. It is a personal ministry which is to be accepted by the one who has been saved as his supreme responsibility and business in life. We have made no adequate adjustment of our lives to the mind and will of God for us until we have recognized that our own first and highest business in life is to preach the Gospel to every creature. Failing to put these eternal responsibilities first, we may expect to be powerless, fruitless, prayerless, joyless, and lacking in spiritual vision and understanding. These priceless blessings are wrought in the Christian by the Spirit, but He cannot manifest Himself in us and through us if we are not willing to walk with God.

I call upon every saved person to rid himself of the blighting impression that some Organic church as a whole is appointed to do this work, and to look upon himself as a God-appointed witness to the Gospel of His Grace. Put yourself back of God’s great project.

By prayers and gifts we can reach the whole world; but there are smaller worlds within the world. We may preach the Gospel in the world of business, of profession, of labor, of home cares. Our avocation may pay expenses; our calling, though it may be limited to personal work, is to witness to His grace. Be a tent-maker if God so calls, but, like the tent-maker of Tarsus, be able to say, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.” No substitutes can be accepted in this service. It is our individual service to God. It is our own expression of love to Him. He has told His love to us by the gift of His life. So, also, we may tell Him of our love by the gift of our lives.

[\[Top\]](#)

OUR OBJECT IN SERVICE

We are appointed to announce the Gospel to every creature. We have no commission to christianize the world. So long as man can act in free will and reject God’s grace, this can never be done. We cannot force men to be saved. Salvation must be the free choice of the heart. Nor is our object to reach all people of some one generation with the Gospel. The ideal is unbiblical. Nothing vital would be gained by it since countless millions have already gone down to death who did not hear the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel to every creature is a world-wide ministry which must be repeated with each succeeding generation. It goes on and on: not until the world is saved, or until some one generation has heard; but this preaching is to continue until the bride of Christ, the heavenly Church, is gathered out. The seed is to be sown in the whole field, but only a fourth part is said to develop into wheat, — the children of God. The evangelizing work will someday be completed. The last member of His body will be gathered in. He will then come, and by His resistless power He will banish evil and establish His kingdom of righteousness in the earth. This is the consistent teaching of the Book of God. (Note Matthew 24, 25; Acts 15:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 19:11 to Rev. 20:6.)

[\[Top\]](#)

IS THE END IN VIEW?

The tempest-tossed mariner takes heart when he sights the land. I ask you, O child of God, whether your eyes can see the haven? Can you see as do the great spiritual seers of this generation that we, who are of the same company of the redeemed who have suffered and labored from the apostles until now, are nearing the end of the age, the end of the pilgrim voyage of the Church, — the body of Christ? Do you see the shore?

To the question, "Watchman, what of the night?" many are replying, "The night is far spent. We hail the Morning Star." The most spiritual, conservative students of God's Word are now hailing the morning. They discern the nearing shore through the unprecedented signs of the times.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matt. 16:3.) Might some of us be as blind and as deserving of this reproof today? Surely the present world situation is full of interest to all, but how all-absorbing and startling it is to the one who sees it in the light of God's Word! Turning to the Bible we discover that

[\[Top\]](#)

CHRISTIANS MAY DISCERN THE APPROACHING END

Hear the Word of God:

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

"But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:1-4).

These Scriptures give us sufficient evidence that the instructed child of God may see the approaching of that day. But what day?

There is nothing indefinite in the Scriptures as to the goal toward which the world is moving. The great prophetic hope of the Old Testament is toward "The day of the Lord" (indicated also by various phrases as "That day," or "The day of vengeance," etc.). It is one of the major themes of the prophets. Isaiah alone speaks of it over sixty times. It is also a great theme of the New Testament; but here it is held in contrast to another day, — a new day which is not seen in the Old Testament. The new day is "The day of Christ." Read with your concordance and you will discover that "The day of the Lord" is Israel's day and a day for the whole world. It extends from the glorious appearing of Christ to the end of the millennium. "The day of Christ" concerns only the Church. It is the time of her judgments and rewards.

In the second passage just read the Apostle writes: "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." "Times and seasons" is another prophetic phrase, the Biblical meaning of which is made clear. The Jewish disciples came to Jesus after His resurrection and just before His ascension saying: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They had every right

to ask this question. That kingdom is covenanted to Israel by explicit promises which cannot be broken. Christ did not say to them that their national, earthly kingdom had been abandoned and merged into a spiritual conquest of the whole earth. He said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." The prophetic term, "times and seasons," then, indicates the time when Israel's kingdom will be established in the earth. When the Apostle wrote, "Of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you," he made reference to the day of Israel's blessing which is also the day of blessing for the whole earth (Psalms 72). Of that great theme there was no need that he should write, for it is everywhere in the Old Testament.

Since this passage begins with the word "But," it is evident that this statement about "The day of the Lord" is mentioned in contrast to something which has gone before. Turning back we discover a description of the events connected with "The day of Christ,"—the new day, the day of the departure of His redeemed from the earth to be forever with Him. Of this day he writes:

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, [Ignorance of this day was more likely since it is not revealed in the Old Testament], concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

This great event is one of the mysteries, or sacred secrets, of God, which means that it was not before revealed as it is here and now. Other passages on this same event read thus:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

In contrast to this last passage and but a few hours before, Christ spoke of Israel's day. He then pictured His return to the earth on the clouds of heaven, the tribes mourning, the regathering of His elect (Israel), and His judgments of the nations when He sits on the throne of His glory (Matt. 24:3 to Matt. 25:46).

[\[Top\]](#)

TWO PROPHETIC DAYS MUST BE DISTINGUISHED

Endless confusion in our understanding of the Bible results when "The day of Christ" and "The day of the Lord" are not distinguished. They are wholly different as to time, people involved, events, and movement.

“The day of Christ” is the next prophesied event. It is that for which we are taught to wait, to look, and which we are to love. It is imminent, and has been since the first promise regarding it was given. It concerns only the saved of this dispensation, whether Jews or Gentiles. At that day sleeping saints are raised and living saints are translated, and all together leave the earth to meet the Lord in the air. It is “timeless, sign-less, and unrelated,” excepting to that which is to follow. “The day of Christ” is not the second coming of Christ. It is not a phase of it. It is simply God’s way of getting His people out of the world before His judgments begin (note 1 Thess. 5:9).

On the other hand, “The day of the Lord” follows “The day of Christ” by about seven years, if Daniel’s prophecies are rightly interpreted (Dan. 9:24-27). It ends the Great Tribulation, delivers Israel and regathers her into her Own land, brings judgments on all the nations, binds Satan, and extends throughout the earth.

“The day of the Lord” is preceded by signs. Paul, speaking of “The day of the Lord,” says:

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed” (2 Thess. 2:3).

The seven signs to which our thought is now to be directed are signs anticipating the farther day, —“The day of the Lord.” We may understand that if “The day of the Lord” is seen to be drawing near, then as certainly “The day of Christ” is even nearer. The mariner sees the distant mountain before he sees the shore.

[\[Top\]](#)

REAL ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

We are not to draw on our imaginations, nor to be led into idle speculations. We who are saved are “the children of the light” and “children of the day.” If that day draws near, we, who have been attentive to God’s Word, should be conscious of its approach. God has indicated some positive conditions leading up to that day. We cannot ignore them. Having considered His faithful Word of prediction, we have but to open our eyes upon this fast consummating age to be solemnized by the evidence of His nearness.

Like the mariner of old, we shall also be heartened by the sight of land. Oh that the promise of His return and the victory which it brings might be to us, as it has been to multitudes of God’s faithful saints, the vision which impels us to our task and which inspires us to strip off our coats and bend to the oars!

Thus has this great hope of His return affected the people of God who have understood it and believed it. Mr. Moody said it was the unceasing inspiration of his ministry. It has been and is the living hope of the great missionaries, evangelists and soul-winners of all generations. Some of these have rowed faithfully when but little of the land could be seen. What shall be said of us before whose eyes the rugged mountains are looming so near? Scripture is being fulfilled on every hand. Brother, will you lift your eyes and see? Will you give heed to the Word of God?

[\[Top\]](#)

THE SEVEN MAJOR BIBLICAL SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Students of industry may study the signs of the times in the business world, and students of political economy may study the signs of the times in the light of present governmental conditions; but it is our

task to study the signs of the times in the light of God's Word. If we touch these world situations, it will be only to relate them to the unfolding of God's divine program in the earth. We believe He will do as He has promised. We ask but one question: Is prophecy about to be fulfilled?

In answering this our theme is limited as to its application, but is as wide in its scope as are the purposes of the Eternal. In considering each sign, first, we shall observe what God has predicted in His Word, and second, we shall estimate the present conditions about us as to whether they fulfill these predictions. I cannot hope to do more than to indicate these great themes:

[\[Top\]](#)

I. THE JEWISH SIGN

Whatever importance man may give to the various nations, it is evident that God, in His program for this earth, has primarily but one nation before His eyes. Gathered about Israel are all the eternal purposes of God for this earth and other nations are recognized and considered in the Book of God only as they are related to the one-nation Israel. The Church, on the other hand, is heavenly. Her people are said to be "strangers and pilgrims in the earth," "ambassadors" in the enemy's land, "citizens of heaven," and heaven is their home. The nation Israel occupies five-sixths of the Bible. This is certainly a great emphasis upon one subject and no one can expect to understand God's Book who is not prepared to give Israel the important place assigned to her of God,— past, present, and future. It is an unworthy judgment and most misleading to suppose that, because this earthly people is now scattered, peeled and afflicted, she has been abandoned of God, or that her earthly covenants have been transferred to the Church. This nation is to abide for all time and she is to possess her own land for ever (Gen. 13:15; Gen. 17:6-8). It was also predicted that this nation should three times be dispossessed of her land and three times be restored to the land (Gen. 15:13-14; Gen. 15:16; Jer. 25:11-12; Deut. 28:62-65; Deut. 30:1-10). Bible history tells us that Israel is now in the third dispossession of her land.

Every prophecy that has been fulfilled up to this hour has been fulfilled literally. They were "plucked off from the land" and "scattered through all the nations" as has been predicted in twelve great prophecies. They are yet to be restored, and for the last time, as predicted in many important prophecies. To this end they are being miraculously preserved as a separate people.

To their final restoration all earth movements are tending. As God has literally taken them off the land, so will He literally place them back in the land which He has given them for an everlasting possession.

In Matt. 24:31-34 we read in connection with "The day of the Lord," when He will return in power and great glory:

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation [nation] shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

This passage is about Israel. She is the "elect" to be gathered. She is typified by the fig tree. She is preserved until all these things are fulfilled. As a fig tree was cursed, she has for many centuries been dry, withered and fruitless. In this passage it is prophesied of her that she will yet put forth the tender shoots of her national life.

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is another prophecy of the restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 37:1-14). Here we are told that the dry bones are "the whole house of Israel" and the vision is said to be concerning their restoration to national life and to their own land (Ezekiel 37:13-14).

Such is a small portion of the body of prophecy concerning the future of God's chosen people. Are there any indications that we are nearing the fulfillment?

It is estimated that there were about fourteen million Jews in the world at the close of the war. To have been without a national home during these past four years has meant the most terrible distress to these people. They are mostly of the poor and suffering people of Europe; yet, as a nation, they are fast becoming the people of greatest influence in the world. Today, out of all proportion, they are the financiers, statesmen, scientists, artists and leaders. We are told that, at the opening of the war, England did not possess the formulas for high explosives and that a prominent Jewish scientist provided her with them. When asked to name his reward, he requested only that Palestine be given back to the Jew. There has always been a Jewish question among the nations since this homeless people left their own land. The question will never be settled until that nation is restored to that land. Then this and all other national problems will be settled, for Israel's King will then reign in righteousness and peace over the whole earth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Psa. 72:11; Psa. 72:17; Psa. 86:9; Isaiah 55:5; Micah 4:2).

Within our generation the Zionistic movement has been started. It has as its purpose the restoration of Israel to Palestine. This movement made feeble progress until the convulsions of the world-war. Through the various steps of its development we need not now pass. Today we behold the victorious Allies at work adjusting the nations and their possessions. All of these Allies are committed to the restoration of Palestine to the Jew. Though there may be delays which we cannot foresee, Palestine will be given to Israel again, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Zionism will triumph. Since the days of Christ nothing of such Biblical importance has happened to this people as a nation. The fig tree is budding and the dry bones of the valley are arising.

[\[Top\]](#)

II. THE GENTILE GOVERNMENT SIGN

Daniel was given to see from his own day until the setting up of Messiah's kingdom in the earth.[1] This period Christ termed, "The times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). It began with the dispersion of Israel from her land and continues until her King returns and re-establishes her in her own everlasting kingdom. It is characterized by Gentile over-lordship, Israel's absence from the land, and her beloved city being trodden down by Gentiles. Two revelations concerning this period were given to Daniel. One was through his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, recorded in chapter two; the other was through his own dream, recorded in chapter seven. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was of a colossal image in four different metal sections. Daniel's dream was of four beasts. The four sections of the image and the four beasts exactly correspond and represent four successive Gentile world-empires that were to be. From a careful study of these, and other Scriptures, we conclude that these empires are, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece (under Alexander), and Rome. The Roman portion is divided by the two legs of the image. So the Roman Empire was divided into its Eastern and Western divisions. Finally there are ten toes to this image, as there are ten horns to the last beast. The following is Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream. (The whole context should be studied):

"This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over

them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:36-44).

At the extremity of this image, there are feet and toes which are of iron mingled with brittle clay. This, we are told, is also a manifestation of a form of Gentile government. In this form of government the people do not cleave one to the other as iron and clay are not mixed. This is a picture of democracy, or individualism, in government as opposed to autocracy, — the autocracy represented in the successive sections of the great image. If all this be true, and history permits of no other interpretation, this prophecy teaches that the "times of the Gentiles" will end with the return of Christ at the time when democracy is established in the earth; for it is in the days of these ten-toe governments over the divided territory of the old Roman Empire that the God of heaven will set up His everlasting kingdom in the earth. What do we now see?

It has long seemed almost impossible that many of the imperial governments of Europe could ever become democratic; but it is now accomplished. A more or less uncertain and feeble form of democratic rule is now being exercised over the territory of the Roman Empire as well as over the whole world. Men are not cleaving one to another. There is no final unit of government that ignores the individual and subordinates him against his will. In democracy the individual is the sovereign. The present adjustment of Europe, we may believe, is being guided by an unseen hand; for the very boundaries of the Roman Empire are re-appearing. The prophecy of Daniel indicates that the shattering blow to the whole fabric of Gentile government by the return of Christ is not far removed. "For when they shall say Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

[1] Abraham saw from his day about 430 years to the deliverance of his family out of Egypt (Gen. 15:13-16). Moses took up the vision where Abraham's vision ceased and saw about 1000 years from the delivery of the people from Egypt to the great dispersion, 500 years before Christ (Deuteronomy 28). Both Abraham and Moses saw the yet future and final establishment of the people in their land under the covenant blessings of God (Gen. 13:15; Deut. 30:1-10). Where Moses' vision ceased, Daniel's vision began. He completed the prophecy to the "cutting off of Messiah." Daniel discloses but little detail from the cutting off of Messiah to the end of Gentile rule. He predicts the conditions immediately preceding the end of the Gentile period and also sees the setting up of Messiah's glorious reign in the

earth. The details of the time from the cutting off of Messiah to His return are presented by Christ (Matthew 13. Note, "world" should read "age" in Matt. 13:22, 39-40, 49).

[\[Top\]](#)

III. THE JERUSALEM SIGN

Looking at the world in the light of the Scriptures, we discover that Jerusalem is the abiding city. She is to be the center of governmental authority when Jehovah establishes His everlasting kingdom in the earth. Jerusalem was the city of David. It is the seat of his throne, which, by the covenant of Jehovah, is to continue for ever (2 Sam. 7:16; Psa. 89:34-37). As Messiah-King, Jesus, the Son of David, came to Jerusalem and was rejected. While weeping over that city He told her that she knew not the time of her visitation. He prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed, that she would even be leveled to the ground. She was destroyed in the year 70 by Titus. Christ also prophesied that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. We should note the word "until," for Jerusalem will not always be trodden down. It is only until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Jerusalem in the hands of Gentiles is God's sign concerning the fact and continuance of Gentile rule.

What is said of the future of this city? Do not form opinions from the politics of the world. Look into God's unerring Word. It matters little what statesmen may decree. The future of this city is made clear by the Word of God. Her future is one of the great themes of prophecy. Isaiah uttered at least twenty-five predictions regarding this city which are yet unfulfilled. No prophecy of the Old Testament pertains to the "New Jerusalem": it is all concerning the literal city in Judaea. According to prophecy, it was the literal Jerusalem which was to be laid in heaps. So, also there is very much Scripture given to prophecies concerning the present literal desolateness which she has so long experienced. But it is this same literal Jerusalem which is to be built again and from which the word of Jehovah is to go forth (Isaiah 2:3). During these days of her dispersion, Israel's thought and prayer is always for Jerusalem:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning" (Psa. 137:5).

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:6-7).

"At that time [in the kingdom] they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem" (Jer. 3:17).

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (Isaiah 62:1. See, also, Isaiah 62:2-12).

Such is the message of prophecy regarding Jerusalem. The present indication of fulfillment is found in the fact that Jerusalem and Judaea have been wrested from the Turk and are now held by a people who are committed, both by their own desires and by the obligations of a sacred trust, to restore these possessions to the children of Abraham to whom they were given for an everlasting possession.

[\[Top\]](#)

IV. THE UNVEILED PROPHECY SIGN

At the close of Daniel's prophecy we read that the heavenly messenger said to him: "Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end" (Dan. 12:9). This phrase, "the time of the end," as used in the Old Testament, refers to "The day of the Lord," and the days of tribulation which immediately precede that day (Matt. 24:29).

We may not understand all prophecy as it will yet be understood, but we are aware that prophecy is now being unveiled as it has never been before. The study of prophecy has been much neglected. These great themes were not preached or discussed a few years ago. It is different today. Witness the large conventions and conferences for the study of prophecy. Note the flood of expositional literature unfolding these themes. Let no one here be so foolish as to suppose that these people are fanatics, or that these teachers and writer! do not know the meaning of the truth they utter. Some older ministers and laymen, whose training goes back to the days when men were indifferent to prophecy, are unable to adjust themselves to this new manifestation of the Spirit in unvoicing the prophetic Scriptures. They often confess that they do not understand or preach these Scriptures; but this is no evidence that other men do not know them or that other men are not called of God to preach them.

Our theme is the most fitting introduction to the consideration of missions. The great missionary passion is born of an intelligent understanding of the plan and program of God. I challenge you to awake to the unveiling of prophecy. It is a sign of the times.

[\[Top\]](#)

V. THE MATERIAL EARTH SIGN

Of many passages that anticipate the material glory and blessings which will be in the earth during the kingdom age, I will quote three:

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. . . . Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water" (Isaiah 35:1-7).

"Creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21, R. V.).

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4).

Such is prophecy relating to the "end time" and the kingdom which will follow. Material things are to be transformed. Every figure of speech has been employed to give expression to this. Within our own generation we have begun to experience a day of invention and material transformation the end of which we cannot foresee. The world is on wheels and wings. Every latent resource of the material earth is being unlocked. Knowledge, if not wisdom, is increased until the old-time general education has had to be set aside for this fast-moving age of specialists.

The present material changes and inventions have their origin in the world-system, and are only a shadow of the prophesied glory that will yet fill the earth. Though the present knowledge and discovery be of the Satanic order, that in it which is true will doubtless abide and contribute to the perfect order that will be. The present inrush of material change cannot be accounted for by human experience of the past. Is it not a signal, though but a shadow, of the coming glory which God will yet accomplish in the earth?

[\[Top\]](#)

VI. THE APOSTASY SIGN

Speaking of "The day of the Lord," the Apostle states:

"Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, or yet be troubled, ... as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:1-3, R. V.).

By this passage we understand that "The day of the Lord" cannot come until two signs are fulfilled: The "man of sin" must be revealed. We are not now concerned with this sign because he cannot be revealed before the Church is removed from the earth (2Thess. 2:7-8); but we are concerned with the apostasy, or "falling away" which is here predicted. Very much is prophesied in the New

Testament regarding this apostasy of the "last days" and "latter times," meaning the last days' of the presence of the true Church in the world. "Last days," when referring to the Church, are days of spiritual darkness: while "last days," when referring to Israel, are days of her kingdom blessings. The second Epistles, excluding 2 Corinthians and including 3 John and Jude, are written largely to picture conditions of the "last days" for the Church. The message of these Epistles is of the most vital importance today. Only the briefest quotations can be made here:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy" (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall be followers of their pernicious ways" (2 Peter 2:1-2).

"Knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, 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" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

“But evil men and seducers [imposters] shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

Far from predicting a converted world at the end of this age, these passages predict the overrunning of false teaching and doctrine by the power of Satan. That world-ruling enemy of God is always seeking to be “like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14) and is, by such Scriptures as these, prophesied to be the author of counterfeit systems of religious faith in the “last days.” A counterfeit is effective only as it is like the real. Satan does not set up a new body of truth; he borrows some truth from the Bible and blasphemes the name and person of Jesus Christ by placing Him at the head of his false religions. In these counterfeits Christ is made out to be a Christian Science healer, a spiritist medium, the unresurrected Christ of Russellism, the ideal man of New Thought and New Theology. Within our one generation these systems have appeared. They are sweeping the earth and even opposing God’s Truth on our mission fields. They are not of God. It matters little what they may call themselves. They, without exception, deny the efficacy of the blood of Christ and His redemption by which alone a lost soul may be saved. Thousands are caught in these systems today believing them to be of God because they do quote some Scripture and do recognize the person of Christ, though they deny His redemptive work on the cross. To choose these teachings, is to have given up every hope of heaven; for there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved. They continue a “form of godliness,” but they “deny the power thereof.” The power of the Gospel is the blood and cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Cor. 1:23-24).

If there was spiritual darkness in the middle centuries, ours is Egyptian darkness. They were blinded with superstition and priest-craft, but they never denied the inspiration of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, the virgin birth, His substitutionary death, His bodily resurrection, or His second advent; yet today every one of these truths is being denied in our leading colleges and universities. This infidelity is being preached from thousands of our so-called Christian pulpits.

Truth has always had its enemies, but they have remained outside. Now the Tom Paines and Ingersolls have put on the vestments of the church. They are preaching their doctrines from her sacred desks.

The new situation consists in the attempt of the enemy to keep the outward form of our faith, quoting Scripture and eulogizing Christ, but denying every word of saving grace. This gigantic monster of confusion originated in Germany and has been largely accepted over the civilized earth. Germany’s military conquest is small compared with her spiritual conquest. Her armies may be defeated, but her unbelief is cursing the world. These “doctrines of devils” which devitalize truth by denying redemption through the blood of Christ were all predicted and were to be God’s sign to us of the presence of the “last days.” What more evidence do we need that these days are already here?

[\[Top\]](#)

VII. THE COMMERCIAL SIGN

The last Biblical sign of the times to be mentioned is presented in James 5:1-8. It is of the “heaping up” of treasures in “the last days.” The days are to be characterized by the increase of wealth and poverty. This is not a discussion of the problems of capital and labor. It is a declaration of the Word of our God. The passage reads:

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.”

Within the memory of most of us, a man who possessed a million dollars had an international reputation. There were three such men in America in my boyhood. The times have changed. Just before the war one denomination enrolled seventeen hundred millionaires. We created nine thousand new millionaires in this country during the first three years of the war. Men do not stop now with a million. One man in New York City has four hundred million dollars more than Adam would have had if he had lived from his time until now (6,000 years), and had received one-hundred thousand dollars a year, and kept it all without interest. Adam would have had six-hundred million, but this man has one billion dollars. The passage continues:

“Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. . . . establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

[\[Top\]](#)

CONCLUSION

We have considered seven major Biblical signs. They are God’s description of conditions immediately preceding “The day of the Lord.” The Jew arises to national life; Gentile governments turn to democracy; Jerusalem is released from the over-lordship of Gentiles; Prophecy is unveiled; Knowledge increases, and men run to and fro; An apostacy must appear which retains the outward form of godliness, but denies the power thereof; And treasure must be heaped together for the “last days.” These are God’s signs and, though they have had no fulfillment since the Scriptures were written, they are being fulfilled at this moment. The rugged mountains appear; but our blessed haven in the presence of our Lord is even nearer. May this solemn truth lead us to be instant in season and out of, season in the work which He has given us to do!

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. . . . Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and ever. Amen.”

“Just a few days — and our tears will have ended;
Just a few hours — and our task will be done;
 Yet still hear them calling,
 From darkness appalling,
While we rest in the light of the fast-setting sun.

“Just a few days —and the gifts we’ve withholden,
Just a few hours —and the call we refuse —
 Will rust on forever,
 Or return to us never,

And Eternity's crown we no longer may choose.

"Just a few days —and then nought will avail us,
The thought of the crown that we might yet have won;
 And ah I what the sorrow
 If we miss on the morrow
Our share in that joy, when He whispers, 'Well done!'

"Just a few days — Oh Lord, strengthen our courage;
Just a few moments — to publish Thy Name.
 In our weakness enfold us,
 Through darkness uphold us,
'Till He Come,' make us faithful Thy love to proclaim."

[\[Top\]](#)