

Setting the Stage for the Last Act of the Great World Drama "The Times of the Gentiles"

*A Lecture on Bible Prophecy, by H. A. IRONSIDE,
from shorthand notes, revised.*



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Setting the Stage for the Last Act of the Great World Drama "The Times of the Gentiles"

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IN announcing my theme, "Setting the stage for the last act of the great world drama, the Times of the Gentiles," I trust I have not needlessly offended the Christian sensibilities of any who are very rightly and properly arrayed against the theatre as an institution; for there can be no question that its influence on our modern civilization is decidedly anti-Christian, and in no sense helpful to spiritual growth. But on the other hand, it is well to remember that in the Word of God we have the finest specimen of dramatic literature extant. I refer, of course, to the book of Job. While not for a moment questioning the historicity of the book, it is nevertheless true that the form in which the inspiring Spirit of God has been pleased to cast this marvelous biography is that of the drama. I would also remind you that the apostle Paul likens the Church of God during the present age to a drama being acted out upon the stage of this world.

When he says, "We are made a spectacle to men and angels," he uses the word "*theatron*," in the original, from which we get our English word "theatre." Angels and men of the world are looking upon the Church of God as a spectacle from which they may learn the wisdom of God, as His wondrous purpose is being unfolded before the eyes of all. So I think one has abundant license for likening the course of the times of the Gentiles to a wonderful drama enacted on the stage of this world.

Another introductory remark which I urgently press upon you is this: The *Christian's* hope is the personal return of our Saviour, "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him." It is with Him, therefore, that we are to be occupied. The eye of faith is looking on to His advent, and it is well not to be too much taken up with lesser persons, whether good or evil in character, or with world-events as such. While there is no real soul-food in being occupied with what I might call the politics of the Bible or the alignment of the nations on the prophetic field, yet it is this very aspect of things which will be before us to-day—not that our interest should be centred in them, however, nor that our attention should be simply fixed upon the great movements which indicate the near close of the present dispensation. These

things are only of moment because they tell us, like the budding fig-tree, that "He is near, even at the door." It is for Himself we wait. It is His voice we long to hear. It is His face we earnestly desire to behold. For we know that when He is manifested we shall be made wholly like Him, and this is the consummation for which His people yearn.

On the other hand, it is well to remember that our Lord severely censured the scribes and Pharisees of His day, who were familiar with the ordinary events of nature, and were also well acquainted with the letter of the Scriptures, but could not discern the signs of the times. Had they been able aright to link the prophecies of the written Word with the events that were transpiring around them, they would have known that Messiah must have been in their midst and must soon be manifested.

I have also a heavy burden pressing upon my heart in regard to the unsaved who seem so unconscious of the solemnity of the times in which we live. If there are such here to-day, and I have no doubt many in this audience are still out of Christ, I trust that as we see how the stage is being prepared for the last act of this great drama, "The Times of the Gentiles," you will be brought to realize that if you are ever going to be saved, it must be soon; for already the Judge standeth at the door. And remember that, as He has said, "When once

the master of the house hath risen up and hath shut to the door," no man shall be able to open it.

The term, "Times of the Gentiles," is only found once in the Word of God, and that is in the 21st chapter of Luke's Gospel where our Lord Jesus Christ Himself so designates the entire period during which the children of Israel are wanderers among the nations, and Jerusalem and the land of Palestine are trodden down by Gentile feet. In our Lord's great prophecy He tells us of the destruction awaiting that city because its people "knew not the time of their visitation," and He warns His disciples concerning the events that would take place. The Romans were to encircle the city with their armies, and take away their place and nation. In Luke 21: 20-24 He says: *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword (that is, the Jews), and shall be led away captive into all nations; and*

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles (not forever, as some people seem to have concluded, but) until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

This expression "Times of the Gentiles" covers a period of time that has now reached to something like 2500 years. It is symbolized in the great metal image as seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, related in chapter 2 of Daniel, and in another form by the prophet in his vision, related in chapter 7. It embraces all the ages since God permitted Nebuchadnezzar to assume world-wide dominion, and delivered His people into his hands as a punishment for their persistent idolatry. From that day to the present Jerusalem has been dominated by Gentile powers.

It is true that for a brief space a remnant were permitted, under Cyrus, to go back to the land and re-establish Jehovah's worship, but always under Gentile authority. As we open our New Testament we see that in the days of the Herods the worship of Jehovah was carried on in Jerusalem still under the authority, and only by permission, of their conquerors. The people of Israel have never been free from the days of the Babylonish captivity until the present time.

Now what I want to show you this afternoon is that the Word of God makes it plain that this world

is on the very brink of a great change—that the times of the Gentiles have almost expired. The stage is already set for the tremendous events which the prophetic scriptures show us will take place during the brief period between the bringing in of “the fulness of the Gentiles” and the end of “the times of the Gentiles.”

In the 11th chapter of Romans the apostle Paul, writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us that “blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” The whole context shows us that when he says “Israel” he has specifically before him the Jews. I know that a great many people are fond of making a distinction in every instance between Judah and Israel, but the apostle says, “I am an Israelite,” though he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a tribe that was linked with Judah and was not included in the confederation of the ten tribes who revolted under Jeroboam’s leadership. “Blindness in part has happened to Israel,” that is, blindness in regard to God’s purpose of grace as revealed in the gospel—blindness as to the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus Christ—blindness as to the great truths of the present dispensation, has judicially come upon Israel and will continue until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Now what does he mean by this term, “Fulness

of the Gentiles?" The apostle James tells us in Acts 15 that God has a definite purpose in all the events which He has been working out from the beginning in His dealings with Israel as a nation; and that at the present time, while they are set aside, He is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name. Now then, if this is the great work of God in the present age, if His special work has not so much to do with His ancient people (who are set to one side because of their rejection of their Messiah), but rather with the salvation of the nations, then we can understand what He means when He speaks of "the fulness of the Gentiles."

When this work of taking out a people from the Gentiles shall be completed, in other words, when the Church as the Body of Christ is complete and is caught up to meet the Lord in the air, the fulness of the Gentiles will have come in, and Israel's blindness will begin to pass away. But Scripture shows us there is to be a brief but dreadful period called the "Great Tribulation," "the time of Jacob's trouble," intervening between *the fulness* of the Gentiles and the end of *the times* of the Gentiles, during which period certain events will take place in the land of Palestine and on the prophetic earth which have been long predicted in the Book of God. Now I feel certain from a careful study of Scripture and

comparing it with present world-events, that the fullness of the Gentiles is almost come in, and that in a very little while the Church of God will be taken out of this scene; then these events relating to the prophetic earth will have their fulfilment.

Now what I desire to make plain to-day is that already everything is being prepared for the solemn events of the time of the end, the brief period of judgment which is to follow the rapture of the Church, the period in which the judgments predicted in the third part of the book of Revelation will be poured out upon this earth.* In order to lead up to this it will be necessary to carry your minds back to the previous acts of this great drama. And so we will look first briefly at what we might call

ACT 1.

When the curtain is rung up, we find Nebuchadnezzar, the "head of gold," and his Babylonian army overrunning the land of Palestine, and finally battering at the gates of Jerusalem. The people of Judah had long provoked the Lord to anger by their

* Those desiring to study this subject more carefully may obtain the present writer's lectures on the book of Revelation, illustrated with a chart, from the publishers of this pamphlet. Cloth boards, \$1.50. Stiff paper cover, 75 cts.

persistence in abhorrent idolatry, and because of this He has forsaken His sanctuary and refused for the time being to acknowledge any relationship to the nation that has proven so disobedient to His clearly expressed will. Then follow dreadful scenes of bloody conquest, one after another, until at last the Holy City itself falls into the hands of the Chaldeans. Their last king, Zedekiah, vainly seeking to escape, is captured, and, in accordance with the prophetic word, is carried to Babylon the city of his imprisonment, but which he never sees, his eyes being put out by order of the cruel conqueror.

Thousands of the wretched people of Judah are carried in chains to the very land from which Abraham, at God's command, separated himself, and went forth "not knowing whither." Babylon was the fountain-head of idolatry, and there for seventy years the lives of the captive Israelites were embittered by hard bondage. Living in the midst of heathenism, they had such a sense of the vileness of idolatry that, whatever other sins have characterized them since, this one has never more been their national offence. The evil spirit of idolatry was driven out by the years spent in the plains of Mesopotamia, and the house was "empty, swept and garnished." By the word of the Lord we know that in the last days this evil spirit will return with seven other spirits worse than itself, and the worship of the

Beast and the Antichrist will be followed by the apostates of the nation.

Just as the curtain is rung down on the last scene of this first act, we see Babylon beleagured, instead of Jerusalem; and Belshazzar, the last king of the Chaldeans, is spending the night in a riotous, idolatrous feast, with one thousand of his lords, blaspheming the God of Israel, and treating with grossest irreverence the captured vessels of the temple which had been brought from Jerusalem. A supernatural hand appears and writes his doom and the end of his kingdom upon the wall of the palace: "Weighed in the balances and found wanting—thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." "And that night was Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, slain," and Darius the Mede took the kingdom.

When the curtain rises again for

ACT 2.

the Medes and Persians are in the ascendancy. This is the silver part of the image. Babylon has fallen; her false gods have been dishonored, and the nations of the East with their monotheistic religions are everywhere triumphant. It was but natural that Cyrus, whose rise and career had been minutely predicted by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before, should show an interest in the captives of

Judah, for both alike professed to worship one true and living God. And so, under the milder rule of the Persians, a remnant of the Jews were permitted to return to the land of Palestine. There they rebuilt the temple, and finally, after receiving permission from Artaxerxes, the city itself was restored, but never on the same scale of magnificence as in the days of old. The worship of Jehovah, however, was again carried on and His people had cause for rejoicing in the midst of their sorrows. For something like a century and a half they enjoyed a measure of liberty under Persian rule, and all the kings of the earth trembled before the successors of Cyrus.

But when the curtain rises on

ACT 3,

we see Alexander the Great, after having united the States of Greece, crossing over from Europe at the head of his famous Macedonian phalanx, intent upon avenging the Hellenic states from the gross insult to their pride, when the great Persian king, Xerxes, with his vast army and navy attempted their subjugation some years before. Alexander is clearly the "he-goat" from the west, as the book of Daniel depicts him, who rushes with choler upon the Medo-Persian ram with two horns, and utterly defeats Darius Codomanus, and overthrows completely the authority of the Persians. For a brief season the

Greco-Macedonian empire holds sway over all the world, and in it we see the "body and thighs of brass." But Alexander himself, though conqueror of the world, cannot control his own passions and, while comparatively a young man, drinks himself to death on the site of the very city of Babylon that has been before us in the last two acts.

After his death his great empire built up at tremendous cost of blood and treasure, is divided into four parts, and for something like two hundred years the descendants of four of his generals partition the world among them. During this long period Palestine is almost continually a scene of war and conflict. The holy land lies just between what Scripture calls the dominions of the King of the North and the King of the South. The King of the North (see Daniel 11) is the ruler of Syria—Seleucas and his successors, generally called the Seleucidae. The King of the South is the ruler of Egypt—Ptolemy and his successors. These two warring powers, Syria and Egypt, contest for the land of Palestine and, during two bloody centuries, it makes no difference which of the two may be victor, the Jews are over and over again obliged to bear the horrors of defeat, until at last in response to their cry for deliverance, God in His mercy as the moral Governor of the universe, raised up the family of the Maccabees to avenge upon Syria the sufferings of His people.

With something like the spirit of the Judges of old, Judas Maccabeus with his small army meets the great Syrian host sent against him by Antiochus Epiphanes, and utterly defeats it. After various triumphant encounters with other divisions of the Syrian troops, Judas Maccabeus marches into Jerusalem, and cleanses the temple of Jehovah, which for 2300 literal days (Seventh-day Adventists, please notice) had been polluted from the time that Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a sow upon the altar of the Lord, and sprinkled its vile broth in the most holy place, thus defiling the sanctuary. At the expiration of the 2300 days, Judas Maccabeus re-instituted the worship of Jehovah, and called the people back to the covenant which God had made with their fathers. Yet Judas himself became instrumental in bringing his people into subjection to the fourth great world empire—the Roman. In appealing to this rising power for help against the Syrians, a measure of peace was guaranteed to the land of Palestine through their means, a Roman representative was sent to make an alliance with Israel, and the Syrians were forced to bow in allegiance to the great power symbolized by the legs of iron, in the 2d chapter of Daniel, which was destined for a time to bear rule over all the earth.

As we open our New Testaments, we see the curtain rising on

ACT 4.

In Luke 2: 1 we read that "there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." Every country in the known world was under the sway of the great iron kingdom, the last of the four world powers predicted in the book of Daniel, which would hold God's people Israel in subjection. The Roman empire was in the ascendancy when our Lord Jesus Christ was born; He was the long predicted Messiah, the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head, the Son of Abraham, and Son of David through whom all the earth is to find blessing and rest. The angel of the Lord announced His advent to the wondering shepherds declaring, "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."

There seemed every reason that He would *not* be born there. Just a few weeks before His birth, His mother was still dwelling in Nazareth, and from every standpoint of human probability, her babe would have been born in that despised city. But the Scripture, which cannot be broken, had decreed hundreds of years before that He should be born in Bethlehem. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that shall have do-

minion, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, who shall rule my people Israel" (Mic. 5: 2).

Now note how that scripture was fulfilled. God moved the emperor of Rome, and a decree went forth from Cæsar that all the world should be taxed. Everyone was obliged to go to his or her own city, the city of their nativity, to be enrolled; and so Mary was brought by Joseph to the town of Bethlehem. And on that night, when there was no room for them in the inn, in a stable among the cattle, God's word was made good, and His beloved Son was born in David's city. He who is the image of the invisible God, had come to earth with hands and heart full of blessings for sinful men—creatures He Himself had made, but who had rebelled against Him, and turned their backs upon His word. The angels cried, "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men," but alas, as one has said, the son of peace was not here when Jesus came. Men were not ready to own Him as the Prince of Peace, the rightful Lord of all. Instead of acknowledging His authority, and gladly owning, "This is our God, we have waited for Him;" we hear them cry, "Away with Him, crucify Him, we will not have this man to reign over us!" In response to Pilate's question, "Shall I crucify your King?" they say, "We have no king but Cæsar." And so they cast God's own Son out of

His own world and nailed Him to the cross of shame. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His Name."

A little remnant received Him, and owned Him as Saviour and Lord. They saw in Jesus the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; for when man had done his very worst and thus shown the impiety and enmity of his heart by crucifying the Lord of glory, God in His infinite love and grace for poor sinners made the soul of His blessed Son an offering for sin. Thus despised and rejected of His own people, the Lord Jesus Christ became the great trespass offering; He was able to say in the words of the 69th psalm, as He thought of your iniquity and mine, of your trespass and mine, "Then I restored that which I took not away." And, thank God, every believing sinner can say of Him, "The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Then, may I say, the curtain rang down upon the last scene of the 4th act of this great drama, when from the Royal Sufferer on that cross of shame the cry came ringing in triumph, "It is finished!" Yes, the work that saves poor sinners was finished once and for all. Then also the dispensation of the Law was ended, and a new dispensation had begun. For,

as has been often remarked, the moment the Lord Jesus died on Calvary's cross, the prophetic clock stopped. All down through the centuries, prophecies relating to Israel had been fulfilled in exact accord with God's book, but when Christ died the clock stopped, and there has not been another tick from the clock of Old Testament prophecy from that day to this. Israel's "times and seasons" were interrupted and will not be resumed until the curtain rises on the final act of the great drama. The Old Testament clearly delineates it, but it has not been put on the stage yet. For these past 1900 years people have been living as it were between the acts. The fourth act ended when the Lord Jesus died on the cross.

ACT 5

will begin when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." And when will that be? "Of that day and hour," said the Lord Jesus, "knoweth no man, not even the Son, but the Father."* In His humiliation as the perfect Man down here, He chose not to draw upon His divine omnipotence to set that day, so He refused to say any-

*The quotation given, refers of course to His appearing, but this also involves His coming first for His Church. If the time of the one was unknown, it necessarily includes the other.

thing about the exact day and hour of His second coming. But, on the other hand, He has caused to be recorded in His Word, by men inspired by the Holy Spirit, that which would enable His people to take their bearings and learn from the signs of the times something of the nearness of His return.

So, when the fifth act begins, you find the city of Jerusalem in the centre of the stage once more, and the Jews are gathered back to the land of Palestine. I think we may say that God is preparing all this at the present moment. The curtain is still down, but the stage is being set. I never was much at attending the theatre, because God in His infinite grace drew me to Himself when I was a boy of fourteen years of age, and so I was in measure saved from the world, though in early days I was foolish enough to take the advice of some older people who should have known better; and as I went to the theatre on several occasions, I remember that before the curtain went up I would wonder what was coming next. Sometimes I could hear a noise going on behind the scenes, and wondered what it meant. What was it? It was simply that they were getting the stage set for the play. If one had been behind the curtain he would have seen them moving the furniture around and getting everything in the positions needed for the next act, and when the curtain went up all was ready for the performance.

Now, as the Lord may enable me, I want to take you behind the curtain for a little while, and I want you to observe how God is getting everything ready for this last act of "the times of the Gentiles." Now, observe carefully. In the time of the end Jerusalem is to be in the centre of the stage. Where is it now? Why it is there already! Since the day when General Allenby marched into the city of Jerusalem, taking it from the Turks without firing a shot—which was clearly in answer to the prayers of God's people—Jerusalem has been in the centre of the stage, and the eyes of the whole world are turned toward the Holy City. Those who know their Bibles are able to understand why it has thus become the centre to which so many eyes are turned; others who cannot give any reason for it, yet know that Jerusalem is to-day the most interesting city in the world; and people eagerly watch for news of the events taking place over there. Why? Because of the tremendous part it has to play in the time of the end, that is, in the period between "the fulness of the Gentiles" and the close of "the times of the Gentiles."

Now it is surely God who has thus brought Jerusalem to the front. God was behind the movements leading up to this. He was behind the scene when Britain accepted the mandate for the land of Palestine. He put it into her heart to fulfil His will. He

has thus been opening a way for His earthly people to go back to their ancient patrimony; and while there is a great deal of opposition coming chiefly from Islam and the Papacy, nevertheless God's purpose shall stand; and whatever we see in the next few months, or few years if the Lord should not come for us, there is no question but that His word is to be fulfilled, and His earthly people will be back in their own land in large numbers when the Church is caught away. But they will go back in unbelief, because there is no intimation given of their conversion nationally before returning to the land.

How solemn it is to see them even now going back and in this condition. Representatives of the great Zionist movement are constantly travelling through Britain, America, and other countries, seeking to arouse the Jews and to secure Gentile aid by giving an account of the work already done in Palestine, and telling of the prospects for their people. They go with earnest hearts believing themselves to be the people of God's special protection. The Word is being fulfilled. The fig tree, the symbol of the Jewish nation, is putting forth its branches, and Mark's Gospel says, according to the best rendering, "When ye shall see these things coming to pass, then know that *He* is nigh, even at the doors."

Recent events, in connection with Palestine and the Jews, tell us with unerring certainty that **the**

coming of the Lord draweth nigh. At the time of the end, Jerusalem is not only to be the centre of the stage, but the land of Palestine is to be a battleground for the greatest conflict the world has ever known. We read that "Jerusalem will be a burdensome stone to all nations, and all that burden themselves with it shall be cut to pieces," and Jehovah declared, "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle." How is it to be brought about? The Zionists are returning to Palestine trusting that the long weary years of hardship under the Gentiles are come to an end. One might well weep tears of blood for them as we learn what they have yet to face. They are going back to greater suffering and tribulation and deeper sorrows than they have ever known in the past, and the whole world will be drawn into these sorrows.

I have often been asked lately, in connection with the great war from which we have yet hardly emerged, "Was it not the battle of Armageddon?" Why should we think so? Battles are named according to the places where they have been fought; and just as the Battle of the Marne was fought on the banks of the Marne, so Armageddon will be fought at Armageddon. And where is Armageddon? In the northern part of the land of Palestine in the great plain of Esdraelon, or Jezreel. Napoleon, standing with his marshals on the mountains

overlooking this great plain over a century ago, said in substance, "What a magnificent battle ground this would be! There is room here for all the armies of all the nations of the world to manoeuvre." And Scripture says that it is there that God is going to gather the armies in the last days.

Now how will this be brought about, and is it possible that the stage is already being set for it? Let us see. When Jerusalem comes into prophetic view again, one man will come prominently into view. He will be a Jew, an apostate Jew, one who denies the God of his fathers—that is, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We read that he shall have no regard for the "desire of women," and any reliable expositor will tell you it means the Messiah. Each Jewish mother hoped that she might be the one chosen to bring into the world the long-expected Seed of the woman.

A symbolic description of this man is given in Revelation 13—a terrible creature, having two horns like a lamb but who speaks as a dragon. In other words he is to be an imitation of the Lamb of God, and the Jews will accept him instead of the true Messiah whom they rejected. Our Lord forewarned them of this when He said, "I am come in my Father's name and ye receive Me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

When Prof. Mosinsohn was in America several years ago, I heard him lecture at the University of California, on Zionism. After making an eloquent plea for the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, and urging Gentiles to do what they could to create a spirit of interest in Israel, he said something like this: "Remember, all the great religions had their origin in the East. All the leading world-teachers arose in the East. Moses arose in the East. Buddha arose in the East. Confucius arose in the East. Zoroaster arose in the East. Jesus arose in the East. Mohammed arose in the East. And the whole world is indebted to the East for their best ethical and religious instruction." But he went on to declare that in spite of all the teachings of these great leaders, there are still a multitude of ethical and religious questions we are not able to solve. And then he added, as with prophetic insight, and apparently moved to the depths of his soul, "Restore the Jew to Palestine, and I guarantee that in a few years we will give to the world the greatest religious leader ever known, who will be able to speak the last word on every ethical and religious question!"

The audience applauded to the echo. I turned to the friend who was with me, and said, "We have listened to something we never expected to hear in our day. We have listened to one of the John Baptists of the Antichrist!"

Yes, the Jew is looking for this coming one. Satan has him ready. The solemn thing is that the Antichrist is possibly in the world to-day! If what I am trying to show you to-day is scripturally correct, at any moment our Lord Jesus may come for His own; and in a very little while after, this lawless one will be manifested; and if so, he may be in the world, though unrecognized, at the present time. The apostate Jews will give heed to him, and receive him as their promised Messiah. Think of their position then, when the Church has been caught away. There will no longer be any Christian statesman in any land. No longer will any nation have an interest in the Jew because of religious sentiment and what the word of God teaches about them. Think then of the jeopardy of the Jewish people in Palestine: To the north the cruel Turk, backed by Russia. To the south the Mohammedan power of Egypt. To the east inimical nations from Afghanistan to Japan. All of these will be eager to possess the land of Palestine, the acknowledged gateway to the Orient. Now, the power of the nations of the West holds them in check, but what will it be when all restraint of a Christian character is removed? Think of the darkness and corruption that will bear rule, which they will deliberately choose instead of subjection to the Word of God!

But what will happen in the West? There will

arise a ten-kingdomed confederation in the territory of the old Roman empire, thus reviving it in a new form and acknowledging the ruler of one of these kingdoms as sovereign-arbiter of the western world. In days gone by people thought it impossible that any such federation should become an actual reality. There is to-day a league of nations, which they do not find it so hard to believe. Scripture shows that in the last days there will be a league of a different character. It will be an *infidel* league, an atheistic league which will seek to cast God out of His own world. This will be the revived Roman Empire. There will be one head, significantly called in God's word, "the Beast." It says, "Man being in honor abideth not; he is like the beast that perisheth."

This head of the western confederation will make a league with the head of the Jewish nation guaranteeing to protect them in their land if any enemies come against them. I think we could almost pick out ten dominions who will be in this coming confederation. I used to have a little difficulty before the war in knowing what part this Western Hemisphere might have in it, until our eyes were opened when we saw the United States drawn into the conflict, whether she would, or no. And why? Because the United States and all the other commonwealths of the Western Hemisphere are Roman in origin. Our entire system of jurisprudence is found-

ed on Roman law. All the countries of America, of both North and South, are included in this.

This western confederation, through its head, the Beast, will enter into a covenant to protect Israel, not for any sentimental reason, but because Palestine is the gateway to the riches of Asia.

Now what I want to make clear is that the ten kingdoms are already being formed and banded together. The stage is being rapidly put in order. I do not mean that the present League of Nations is identical with the feet and toes of iron and clay in the image, but it is preparing the way for it, and is therefore most significant.

We read also of another confederation in the time of the end, in the 38th and 39th of Ezekiel—a great northern league, formed of the descendants of the ancient Scythians and the Slavs: “Gog of the land of Magog.” Gog, we are told, means “extension.” Magog is said to mean “expansion.” The nations comprising this power of whose origin we read in the 10th of Genesis, emigrated into the cold northern regions, and peopled those vast countries. In the end-time these confederated peoples beyond the limits of the old Roman empire, who have ever been determined enemies of the Jews, will make an effort to conquer the land of Palestine for themselves. Russia and Northern Germany, with the Balkan peoples, and other nations clear down to the Persian

Gulf, all seem to be included in this confederation. Has not this almost taken shape already? Now look at the northern part of the stage. Is there no significance in the reported understanding between Germany and Russia? Take the Church of God out of the world to-morrow, and that confederation might spring into existence at once.

These vast hordes from the north will come down on the land of Israel when they are dwelling in unwalled villages, thinking themselves secure. But when about to fall on the city of Jerusalem they will be destroyed; and so literal and great is the destruction that we are told the people will for seven years burn as fuel the war materials left upon the mountains, and for seven months they will be going about burying their dead.

This invasion of Gog and Magog must not be confounded with the conflict of Gog and Magog in the 20th chapter of Revelation. That of Ezekiel is pre-millennial, while that of Revelation is post-millennial .

In the 11th of Daniel we find that when the Anti-christ reigns, for a while all will seem to go well, until the King of the North shall rise up against him. The King of the North of old was the king of Syria. The Ottoman empire for centuries occupied all that district, but it is possible that Turkey will be destroyed before the time here predicted.

Yet recent events look as though the King of the North might rise out of the Turkish dominion. At any rate he will be in the territory now held under a French mandate. Who knows but that he is already in the world? He will astonish the world by his power over the minds of the people who seemed utterly destroyed a little while ago. He is determined to push the Jew out, and though he has no power to do it himself, he is backed up by the great confederation of Gog and Magog, who use this King of the North as a catspaw to bring on the conflict in Palestine. Thus "he shall be mighty, but not in his own power."

It would seem that he will also be aided and abetted by the King of the South. The King of the South of old was the king of Egypt. But listen, Egypt has had no royal ruler since the days of Cleopatra. This queen was the last ruler, and no person of royal blood has sat on the Egyptian throne since her day; and the prophetic word declares that no prince of Egyptian blood will ever sit on the throne of Egypt (Ezek. 30: 13). But what shall we say to this? To-day a king is sitting on the throne of the Pharaohs! Has Scripture been falsified? No, it has not. The king of Egypt is of Albanian origin; he was placed there by the desire of the people and recognized as king though not of royal blood—waiting till the curtain goes up.

And so Jerusalem is in the centre of the stage; and God says, "I will gather all nations against her;" and we are beginning to see how easily this will be brought about. In Revelation we read that the "Euphrates shall be dried up that the way of the Kings of the East may be prepared." The Euphrates is generally recognized as a symbol of the Turkish empire, and it speaks of the gradual destruction of that power. We have seen that going on for years. It looks as though it will be revived for a time and will then go down to rise no more. The "King of the North shall come to his end, and none shall help him," when the western confederation goes to aid the king of Jerusalem. Thus the Euphrates dries up.

Now here come the armies of the "Kings of the East," and who are these? There are many suppositions as to who they are, but is not this conclusive? The word rendered "the east" is the word for "the sun-rising." The kings of the sun-rising are going to have a part in this great conflict, and who are they? Japan has been called the "empire of the rising sun" for a millennium at least, and how marvelously has she come to the front within the last few years, getting ready for the last act of the world's great drama!

Now see. Is not the stage pretty nearly set? Jerusalem is in the centre; the ten kings are banding

together over here to the right. The great dominions of the north are here at the back. The allies were astounded when Germany and Russia a year ago declared that they had entered already into a secret compact, and Scripture shows that they will be together in the time of the end.

Then we have the restlessness in the East—restlessness in Japan, whose pride is touched to the quick by the fact that the nations of the West do not want her people as settlers, and she is waiting to plunge into the conflict when she feels she can do so to advantage; and who knows what part China, India, Afghanistan, and the other countries of the East will play in the great drama? Does it take any stretch of the imagination to picture these kings from the sun-rising, awaking in wrath, with the battle-cry, "Asia for the Asiatics," seeking to drive every western power from Palestine?

Now all that I proposed to do this afternoon was to show you that the stage is being set. The curtain may go up at any time. Every Christian may be taken away from the world before to-morrow's sun arises, and everything would be in readiness for the last act of the times of the Gentiles.

My unsaved friend, what about you? Is this not worth your sober thought? If what I am speaking of should become an accomplished fact now, would you be among those who would be left for

the coming judgment and the sinner's doom?

The darkest days that this world has ever had are just before us. One does not desire to needlessly harrow people's feelings, but this is the testimony of the Book—the greatest conflict the world has ever known is just ahead. The great tribulation comes on apace; but, thank God, the gospel of grace is still being preached, and all who believe may be saved from "the wrath to come." Our Lord Jesus is coming again in that special character, as the Deliverer from the wrath that is to come.

"Earth, what a sorrow lies before thee!
None like it in the shadowy past,
The sharpest throe that ever tore thee—
E'en though the briefest and the last.

I see the fair moon veil her lustre,
I see the sackcloth of the sun;
The shrouding of each starry cluster,
The three-fold woe of earth begun,

I see the shadow of earth's sunset,
And wrapped in these the Avenger's form,
I see the Armageddon onset,
But I shall be above the storm.

There comes the moaning and the sighing,
There comes the hot tear's heavy fall,
The thousand agonies of dying,
But I shall be beyond them all!"

Grace, and grace alone, can enable one honestly to say that. Trust then the Saviour for yourself, and know assuredly He will be *your Deliverer* from the wrath to come.

In closing, I would commend to my fellow-Christians the serious words of the apostle Paul, found in the 7th chapter of 1st Corinthians, verses 29 to 31: "*But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*"

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