

The Signs of the Redeemer's Return

by A.W. Pink

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning the signs of the times and being prepared for the Redeemer's return.

Scripture: Ezekiel 21:27, Daniel 12:4, Matthew 16:2-3, Mark 4:26-29, Luke 21:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, James 5:1-9, 2 Peter 3:3-4, Revelation 3:14-22

Topics: "Signs Of The Times", "Readiness for Christ's Return"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the signs indicating the imminent return of the Redeemer, urging believers to be vigilant and discerning of the times. He reflects on the historical expectations of Christ's return, the prophetic signs that have been fulfilled, and the current state of the church and society, which he describes as a mix of spiritual awakening and apostasy. Pink warns against the dangers of complacency and ignorance of Scripture, encouraging the faithful to recognize the signs of the times and prepare for the coming of the Lord. He highlights the importance of understanding prophecy and the urgency of living in light of Christ's return.

Transcript

The Redeemer's Return

THE SIGNS OF THE REDEEMER'S RETURN

Chapter 6

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

Luke 21:28

AS we have shown in the last chapter, the apostles and their converts looked for Christ to return in their own lifetime. They did not affirm that He would but they believed that He might. But eighteen centuries have passed since then and yet He has not come. The question therefore arises, What evidence is there that the second advent of our Lord is now nigh at hand--that is, nigh as judged even by human measurement of time? May there not be another eighteen centuries which must yet run their weary course before the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings?

Have we any means for ascertaining the approximate period when our Lord may be expected to appear? Have we any good ground for believing that another long interval will not yet elapse before the Savior comes back again? In connection with other great events which God has brought about in human affairs, fair warning has been given to announce their approach. The Flood-judgment, the length of sojourn and the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, and the time of our Lord's first advent, may be cited as illustrations.

Thus, before each of the marked interpositions of God in the past, plain intimation of their approach was given. Has then the time--the approximate time--of the great consummating event of all events been left shrouded in such secrecy that it is impossible for us to know anything about it until it arrives? Nay verily. The inspired language of Holy Writ declares--"But of the times and the 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. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:1-6). Words could scarcely be plainer. God does not desire His people to remain in ignorance concerning the period when His Son shall return.

Just as of old, He said concerning the impending destruction of Sodom "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" so has God graciously taken the Church into His counsels and revealed to us a "part of His ways" at least. We do not know the day or the hour, we are unable to determine the precise year when the Redeemer shall return, but we do know that His coming is now near at hand. We know it from the testimony of God's living oracles. He has not left us in darkness, but has placed in our hands the more sure Word of Prophecy "whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts."

The prophets of Old Testament times are commended because that they "searched what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. 1:11); surely, then, a similar "searching" is commendable in us. As we study the Old Testament Scriptures we discover that a number of Signs" were given to herald the first advent of Christ. There were conditions to be realized and certain events which would come to pass, and as these conditions were met and as these events occurred those who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38) saw in these things so many intimations of the approach of Messiah's advent and His public manifestation.

The Scriptures of Israel revealed the fact that the Redeemer would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Mic. 5:2); they foretold that He should be a lineal descendant of David and therefore of the Tribe of Judah (Ps. 132:11); they announced that a forerunner should go before Him and make straight His way (Isa. 40:13); they went so far as to set forth the approximate date of His appearing, namely, before the scepter had departed from Judah (Gen. 49:10), while the Temple was yet standing (Mal. 3:1), and sometime before the sixty-ninth week of Daniel had run its course (Dan. 9:24-27).

In like manner, the New Testament Scriptures also record certain "Signs" in connection with our Lord's second coming to the earth, We say "to the earth," for let it be distinctly understood that Scripture

interposes nothing whatever between the present hour and the coming of Christ for His saints, when He descends into the air and catches them up to Himself. All the "Signs" recorded in the Word of God have to do with His return to the earth. But as there will be only a comparatively short interval between the two stages in the second coming of Christ, the Signs which proclaim the one announce the other.

If the fulfillment of certain inspired predictions declare that the return of Christ to the earth is near at hand, then HIS descent to the air is so much nearer still. If we know that the end of the Age itself is now almost reached, then it is doubly certain that the rapture of the saints may occur at any hour. Yet, we repeat, the various Signs to which we shall call our readers' attention have to do with our Lord's return to the earth. We repeat this for the sake of warning, for as another has said, the business of the Christian is not to be looking for signs but listening for a Shout (Haldeman).

Yet, while we ought not to be looking for signs we may look at them (W. Scott). As we have said, the Old Testament Scriptures foretold certain things concerning the Lord when He should appear: fore-announced Signs were to characterize the times of His advent. But the Jews failed to discern these Signs and the Savior reproached them for their failure. Said He, "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring.

O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the Signs of the Times?" (Matthew 16:2, 3). The reason why the Pharisees and Sadducees were blind to the significance of the things which were then transpiring before their eyes, was that they were ignorant of the contents of that Book in which these Signs were recorded. This is clear from the words of our Lord on many occasions--"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matthew 22:29). The reason why they were ignorant of the contents and real meaning of the Scriptures was because they had substituted their own "tradition" for the Word of God (Mark 7:13).

And history has repeated itself! We are living in a day when the vast majority of people are unable to "discern the Signs of the Times," when our religious leaders "err, not knowing the Scriptures" because they are following their own "tradition" rather than the Word of God. The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees because they could "discern the face of the sky" but would not take the necessary pains to "discern the Signs of the Times." Then let, us beware lest we fall through the same example of unbelief.

Let us approach the Scriptures reverently and prayerfully, seeking to discover our position on the calendar of prophecy and thus be prepared for the solemn yet blessed events now so near at hand. While it is true that the great majority of the Jews who lived during the days of our Lord's first advent failed to discern the Signs of the Times and in consequence did not profit by the announcements of their prophets, nevertheless, there were a few who were "waiting for the Consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25), And so it is now, By the grace of God, there is a remnant today who are reading the Signs of the Times in the light cast by the prophetic Word.

At some of these Signs we shall now look. And 1. The Recovery and Revival of the Blessed Hope itself. In Daniel 12:4, 9, 10 we read--"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." While this prophecy has primary reference to Daniel's people, the Jews, and so far as they are concerned will receive its accomplishment in the "godly remnant" of the Tribulation period, yet, like all prophecy, this also has a double fulfillment and therefore has a secondary application to the Church of God today.

"And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the Time of the End. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand." As we shall yet seek to show this prophecy the is a composite one and its fulfillment is being manifested in many different directions. That to which we would now direct attention is the manner in which this prediction has been accomplished in connection with the Scriptures and particularly in regard to the modern interest and wide-spread study of Prophecy.

As is well known, the book of Daniel is largely composed of prophecies, prophecies which refer frequently to the closing day of the Times of the Gentiles. The Scripture now before us makes known seven facts, namely--First, that the contents of Daniel's prophecies were to be "shut up" and "sealed;" Second, that the book of Daniel should not remain a "sealed" book for ever; Third, that at "the Time of the End" it should be unsealed, for it was to be "shut up" only "to" and "till" the Time of the End; Fourth, that at the Time of the End there should be a "running to and fro," in other words, there should be a revival of interest in the prophetic word, an earnest inquiry and seeking for light; Fifth, that as the result of this revival of interest in and study of the prophetic word "knowledge shall be increased;" Sixth, as the consequence of this increase of knowledge" many would be "purified, and made white, and tried; Seventh, that notwithstanding this, the wicked would "do wickedly" and none of them would "understand," thus are we told in this last item that the understanding of the Word of God is a matter of spiritual discernment and not a question of Intellectual acumen: if it were the latter then the wicked might understand as readily as the righteous (compare Matthew 18:10-15).

Let us briefly consider these seven points and note how remarkably they are verified in present day conditions. Daniel was informed that the things he had seen and the communications which he had heard were not to be turned to use for the present. All was to be as a sealed book until a distant day, in fact would be "shut up" until the Time of the End. How accurately and literally this part of our prediction has been fulfilled may best be seen by reviewing the writings of theologians and commentators who lived prior to the last century.

For the most part the prophecies of Daniel have been utterly neglected until recently, and where attempts were made to open up its contents the wildest theories were indulged and the most absurd interpretations were adopted. There was no spiritual understanding. The book was "shut up!" But the book of Daniel was not to be shut up forever. God had some wise purpose in making these disclosures to His prophet. He had some good reason in making known to Daniel the trend and end of the various world empires.

At the Time of the End the contents of the book of Daniel were to be opened and unsealed, for many would "run to and fro" and knowledge would be "increased." How plainly has this mark of the end been manifesting itself during the past century! Though the masses still turn from prophecy as from a sealed book, yet what a stir and study has it awakened in many earnest minds! "Many" have turned to the word of prophecy (witness the great number of books now written on the subject) and given their most sedulous attention to the understanding of its contents.

Particularly has this been the case with the book of Daniel itself. Large numbers of God's people have been moved to inquire concerning the things recorded therein and have spared no pains or cost to obtain a knowledge of them, and under the blessing of God and the guidance of His Spirit light upon this book is steadily increasing and its mysterious hieroglyphics are becoming clearer and plainer as the fulfillment of its predictions draws nearer. Expositors of this important book may differ in details but in the main they are agreed and their leading conclusions are the same.

The result of this earnest and widespread study of prophecy is seen in the increased devotion and consecration of God's people--"many shall be purified and made white." Side by side with increasing light on prophecy has come a deepened sense of responsibility toward the lost. It is a striking fact that the remarkable growth in Foreign Missions of last century synchronized with the widespread turning to the prophetic Word. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century the heathen were, with rare exceptions, utterly neglected, so also was it with the book of Daniel.

On the other hand, in strict accord with Daniel's prophecy, side by side with the increase of prophetic light and its purifying effects on the people of God, we find the "wicked doing wickedly" and that none of them "understand"--i. e., that the wicked are in utter ignorance of the terrible times (referred to in Daniel) which lie just ahead of them. One of the most marked and blessed results of the widespread inquiry and enlightenment upon the subject of prophecy has been the recovery and revival of the Blessed Hope.

We believe it is to this that Daniel's prophecy (in its present-day application) refers when it says "but the wise shall understand." The "wise" are those who are governed by God's Word and whose thoughts are formed by the teaching of Holy Writ, for "The entrance of Thy words giveth light" (Ps. 110:180). What is it that the "wise" understand? They "understand" the meaning of the days in which they are living. They "understand" that the last days of the age are upon us. They "understand" that we have now reached "the Time of the End."

They "understand" that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Parallel with the prophecy of Daniel is the teaching of Christ in the parable of the Bridegroom and the virgins. This parable sets forth the several attitudes of the Lord's people, in different periods of this Dispensation, with reference to their expectation of the Redeemer's Return and was uttered in response to the disciples' questions (recorded at the beginning of the previous chapter) "What shall be the sign of Thy coming and the end of the age?"

At the beginning of the Christian era all His followers were waiting for the Lord's appearing. Then followed a mixed condition--part were wise and part were foolish. Then, while the Bridegroom tarried, "they all slumbered and slept." The Blessed Hope was lost and the church lapsed into a condition of spiritual apathy. But this sleep was to be broken. It was foretold that at the midnight hour a cry should be made--"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him:" (Matthew 25:6).

This was a prophetic announcement that just before our Lord returned, a loud and distinct testimony concerning His coming would be sounded upon the dull ear of Christendom. This Cry is now going forth. Everywhere the servants of God are proclaiming the news that the Lord is at hand. All over the world the cry is being raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." Never since the days of the apostles has there been so much yearning and longing, preaching and teaching, watching and praying, upon the subject of Christ's second coming as there is now.

The parable of the Bridegroom and the virgins corresponds very closely with the prophecy of Daniel 12. The midnight Cry--the recovery of the Blessed Hope--matches the unsealing of the prophetic word and the "increase" of "knowledge." The arising of the virgins agrees with the "running to and fro." The "trimming" of their lamps--preparation for the Lord's appearing--tallies with the man being "purified." The two classes--the wise and the foolish virgins--corresponds exactly with the two classes mentioned by Daniel--the "wise" and the "wicked," for just as it is said that "none of the wicked shall understand," so the foolish virgins shall declare "our lamps are gone out"--they will be in the dark!

One other Scripture which confirms us in saying that one of the Signs which heralds the Return of Christ is the midnight Cry, is to be found in 2 Peter 3:3, 4--"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." Observe that it is in the "last days" (of this Age) that there should arise a class who shall scoff at the promise of Christ's return, which is further intimation that at the Time of the End there would be a renewed and special testimony to the Blessed Hope.

To return to Daniel's prophecy. "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). These words must not be limited to an application which confines; it to the increase of light on the prophetic word, but should be taken in their widest signification. We believe they have reference to the recent and phenomenal increase both in Travel and Knowledge. The words "run to and fro" would seem to point to modern methods of transportation.

How this mark of the end time is being manifested today is well known to all. "Railways cover the earth and steamers track the sea like a mighty spider's web" (Blackstone). Automobiles have become commoner than horses, and appearances indicate that within a few years at most airplanes will be used as a regular means of travel. Observe that our text says, "Many shall run to and fro." Restlessness now seems to be common to human nature. The rising generation is obsessed with this spirit of running to and fro.

Witness the enormous growth of immigration. Study railroad statistics and mark the rapid increase in the number of passengers carried, now numbering hundreds of millions annually. How accurately these words "many shall run to and fro" describe present-day conditions! Everything is in a turmoil. Everybody is on the run, and hence it is that the Day of Rest has become a thing of the past. "And knowledge shall be increased." What advances have been made in the educational realm!

Facilities which hitherto were available to only a privileged class are now open to the children of the artisan and common laborer. Illiteracy will soon be a thing of the past. By the multiplication of schools, colleges and universities "knowledge" has been marvelously increased. Another agency for increasing knowledge is the press. "The public press, with its ceaseless stream of news and information, covers the earth with its ever increasing circulation, like falling leaves from some mighty tree of knowledge.

And of the making of many books, there is truly no end" (Blackstone). Witness the remarkable increase of scientific knowledge. Contrast our present-day knowledge of astronomy, archeology, zoology, physiology, psychology, with what was known about them even one hundred years ago. How wonderfully man has harnessed to his service the forces of Nature! Things never dreamed of by our grandparents are now actualities, and many of them mere commonplaces. What discoveries have been made!

What inventions have been perfected! What triumphs have been achieved on land and sea, in the air and under the waters! How the discovery and utilization of electricity has revolutionized every department of our life! Truly, scientific knowledge has been increased. But perhaps the prediction of our text refers more particularly to the increase of spiritual knowledge. During the last century hundreds of millions of Bibles and Testaments have been circulated by our Bible Societies.

The Word of God has now been translated into more than four hundred languages and distributed all over the earth. By means of thousands of missionaries laboring upon the foreign field, spiritual knowledge has

been marvelously increased. So at home. Bible training schools, Bible conferences, and Bible classes, are multiplying annually. Wherever we look and wherever we go we find that knowledge is being increased. And all of the things to which we have referred have appeared during the last century!

Surely we have indeed reached the Time of the End. Our Lord's parable of the growth of the seed is in striking accord with the prediction of Daniel that at the Time of the End knowledge should be increased--"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:26-29). Like all of our Lord's utterances, there is more in these words than meets the eye at first glance. In this parable we have five things. First, the sowing of the seed. Second, a period of sleep following the seed sowing. Third, the growth of the seed. Fourth, the order of growth described--first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Fifth, the harvest.

The above parable corresponds very closely with the first three found in Matthew 13. Like them it is prophetic in its scope. dispensational application is simple yet remarkable. The sowing of the seed here is the same as the sowing of the seed in Matthew 13 and relates to the gracious mission of the Lord and His apostles at the beginning of this dispensation. The seed was the Word of God (Luke 8:11). The period of "sleep" (Compare Matthew 13:25; 25:5) was the spiritual lethargy of the third and Fourth centuries which merged into the 'Dark Ages,' and corresponded with the order of nature.

The natural seed sown into the ground becomes corrupt and dies, or almost dies; and so it was with the Divine seed. The epistles of the New Testament furnish evidence of how quickly and how sadly the purity of the Word became corrupted with the grossest errors and adulterations. But yet it lived. And more, it "grew." The language used in the parable describing the order of growth corresponds exactly with its prophetic fulfillment. There was first the "blade," which in nature continues in a feeble state of vitality for a long time.

So it was with the Divine "seed" all through the 'Dark Ages.' "Then the ear;" does not this point prophetically, to the Reformation period when copies of the Scriptures were multiplied a hundredfold and given once more to the masses in their own tongue. "After that the full corn in the ear." How remarkable! as the harvest approaches, the original seed now reappears, though greatly multiplied in quantity. And this is exactly what we are witnessing, today. Many long lost truths, truths which have been buried beneath the soil of human tradition, have been given back to the people of God.

And, as to multiplication in quantity, contrast the millions of copies of the Scriptures now in circulation with the limited number in use in the first century when printing was unknown. Yes, the Seed has "grown" though man "knoweth not how." But note the next words: "But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come." How unspeakably solemn! What follows the "full corn in the ear?" Immediately, "we are told, "he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come."

Compare with this Matthew 13:39--"the harvest is the end of the age." And compare further Revelation 14:15--"Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe!" Thus by putting side by side our Lord's teaching in the above parable with the prophecy of Daniel we find that the "full corn in the ear" corresponds with 'increase of knowledge" and "immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come" ("the harvest is the end of the age" Matthew 13:39) agrees with

the "Time of the End."

To review and sum up: From Daniel 12 we learn that at the Time of the End knowledge shall be increased; from Matthew 25 we learn there would be a recovery of the Blessed Hope and a proclamation concerning the imminent Return of the Bridegroom; from 2 Peter 3 we also learn that in the "last days" there is to be a renewed and special testimony borne respecting the second coming of Christ; and in Mark 4 we learn that the Divine seed (the Word) was to grow until it brought forth the "full corn in the ear" and that this increase of fruitage occurred "immediately" before the harvest.

How wonderful and how perfect is the harmony of Scripture! The fact that these things are now spread before our eyes declares in language loud and clear to all who have ears to hear that the Time of the End has been reached, that the Bridegroom is now at hand, that the 'last days' are already entered upon, and that the Harvest--symbol of Divine judgment--is impending and to be expected "immediately." 2. The Apostasy which prepares the way for the Anti-Christ. The question has often been raised and is still hotly disputed as to whether the world is getting better or worse.

Are conditions in general more propitious or more iniquitous? From one viewpoint conditions are improving, from another they are deteriorating. Good and evil are now both of them rapidly coming to a head. This is exactly what our Lord foretold in the parable of the Tares--"Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:30). Both the wheat and the tares are growing. Hence it is that present-day conditions are so conflicting. Godliness and lawlessness, good and evil are, side by side, each advancing, the conflict between them ever increasing in severity.

And hence it is that side by side with the increase of spiritual light and prophetic knowledge, we are now witnessing also a widespread departure from the Truth. As the light increases the shadows deepen, it is written, "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18); but, it is written again, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Tim. 3:13). Of old, the question was asked, "Watchman what of the night!" and the answer from the lonely watcher upon his lofty tower was "The morning cometh, and also the night" (Isa. 21:11, 12).

Here again we meet with a seemingly conflicting testimony. Yet, the conditions which prevailed in Isaiah's day are precisely the same which characterize ours. "The morning cometh," the morning of the Perfect Day. As we have shown above, the intimations of the approaching Morn are unmistakable. The increasing light vouchsafed by God upon His Word together with the recovery of the Blessed Hope, herald the approach of the Morning Star, which shall precede by a few years the arising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

"And also the night." The Night which shall draw down the curtain upon "man's day." The Night of the world's judgment, when "the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:2). The Night of the Great Tribulation when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light" (Matthew 24:29). The Night when the Power of Darkness shall be given full sway for a little season because men loved darkness rather than light. That Night which shall so soon come upon Christendom because it has turned away from God's Word which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

And the intimations of the approaching Night are as marked and as plain as are the heralds of the coming Day. Consider one of them. "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, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). The "day" mentioned here is the Day of the Lord (see Isaiah 2) which follows the present day of man. The Day

of the Lord succeeds the Day of Salvation, now so nearly ended, and its character and course is fully described in the last book of the Bible.

The "man of sin, the son of perdition" referred to in our text will come before us for consideration in a later chapter, sufficient now to say, that he makes his appearance some time after the Rapture of the Church and that he continues in his terrible course of open defiance of God until the Lord Jesus returns in power to the earth when He shall destroy this Wicked One by the brightness of His coming. The "falling away" (apostasy--Greek) is one of the things which shall be the harbinger of the Day of the Lord and prepare the way for the revelation of the Antichrist.

The fact that the "falling away" has already commenced, yea, has even now advanced a terrible distance, is proof that the appearing of the Man of Sin is nigh at hand, and therefore that the "last days" of this dispensation are upon us. The "falling away" which 2 Thessalonians 2:3 predicts has reference to departure from the Word of God, and apostasy from the faith onto delivered unto the saints. Specifically, it refers to repudiation of the Truth by those who are its professed friends.

The fulfillment of this solemn prophecy has now been going on for upwards of half a century, and sad to say, the circle in which it is receiving its accomplishment is ever growing wider and wider. More than forty years ago the late C. H. Spurgeon protested faithfully and fearlessly against the "Downgrade movement" of his day, and owing to the doctrinal looseness and theological unsoundness of many of its leading spirits withdrew from the English Baptist Union. The "Downgrade" has gone on apace since then.

The majority of our Seminaries in which our preachers receive their theological training, are hot-beds of rationalism, skepticism, and infidelity. The deadliest foes of the Faith are now to be found inside of the professing Church and not outside as hitherto. The "vain philosophies" and Scripture-denying heresies of such agnostics as Darwin and Huxley are now openly espoused and enthusiastically proclaimed from many of our leading pulpits. The "falling away" has had an awful exemplification in the "Higher Criticism" movement, a movement which originated with atheists but has operated within the professing church.

The "Higher Critics" are men who deny the supernatural element in the Scriptures, who undermine their authority and belittle their value. They are rationalists whose minds are blinded by the god of this world, whose they are and whom they serve. No censure of them can possibly be too severe. The inspired apostle referred to them when he said, "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 bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1).

The words that follow this terrific indictment, reveal the sad havoc wrought by these apostates, and tells us of the doom which awaits them--"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." (v. 2, 3). The "falling away" is evidenced on every hand. Not only are many of our Seminaries cesspools of spiritual corruption, not only are hundreds of our pulpits now filled by traitors to the cause they profess to champion, not only is every cardinal doctrine of the faith attacked and denied by the very ones paid to defend them, but the evil effects of such teaching from our religious leaders have influenced multitudes of souls committed to their care.

The man in the pew, following the lead of his teachers, has lost faith in the Bible as a Divine revelation, and in consequence, no longer submits to its authority. Hence it is that there is such a "falling away" in the

number of genuine conversions--we say "genuine" conversions because there are multitudes of those who come forward to shake some popular preacher by the hand, multitudes of card-signers, "trail-hitters" etc., etc. Hence it is that there has been such a sad and such a wide-spread "falling away" from the old time family worship.

Hence it is that we now witness such a lamentable "falling away" from the mid-week prayer-meeting. Hence it is that there is such an awful "falling away" from the observance of the Holy Sabbath. Hence it is that there is such a fearful "falling away" from the moral standards of former days. Hence it is that there is now such an ever-growing "falling away" from Sunday School attendance all over the land. Yes, the "falling away" has commenced and is already far advanced. The "falling away" is also to be seen in the many false systems of recent development.

We may cite illustrations the "New Theology" formulated and popularized by R. J. Campbell; "Christian Science" (so called) with its repudiation of sin and the vicarious Sacrifice of Christ; "Russellism," with its horrible blasphemies upon the person of our Lord and its erroneous and soul-destroying heresy of the 'second chance;' "Spiritualism" with its intercourse with demons who impersonate the dead. Formerly three-fourths of the votaries of these anti-Christian systems were outwardly attached to the Truth, inasmuch as they were members of evangelical denominations.

The stone "falling away" may be seen in the rapid decay of Protestantism and the silent but sure growth of Roman Catholicism. The "falling away" which characterizes our day was referred to by the apostle when he said, "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. 4:8, 4). That time has arrived!

Church-goers today will not endure "sound doctrine." Those who preach the total depravity of man, who insist upon the imperative necessity of the new birth, who set forth the inflexible righteousness and holiness of God, and who warn against the Eternal and conscious torment awaiting every rejector of Christ, find it almost impossible to obtain a hearing. Such preachers are regarded as puritanical pessimists, and are not wanted. In these degenerate times, the masses demand that which will soothe them in their sins and amuse them while they journey down the Broad Road.

The multitude is affected with "itching ears" which crave novelty and that which is sensational. They have ears which wish to be "tickled," ears which eagerly drink in the songs of professional and unsaved soloists and choiristers, ears which are well pleased with the vulgar slang of our modern evangelists. Concurrent with this "Falling away" we may note, 3. The Laodicean state of Christendom. In Revelation two and three we have seven Epistles addressed to the seven churches in Asia.

These Epistles--in keeping with the nature of the book in which they are found--are prophetic in their scope. They record the sentences of the Divine Judge who appears in the midst of these churches (see 1:13-20) inspecting and passing decisions. They contain a panorama of the Church's history. They give us a complete outline of the entire course of the Christian profession in this Age. That course is one of failure, declension, of going from bad to worse, until at the end a condition is reached which compels the Lord to utterly repudiate that which bears His name.

We cannot now do more than hurriedly trace the order of thought and point out the leading features in these seven prophetic pictures. (These Epistles to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1:11) were addressed to churches which were in existence when John wrote the Apocalypse and therefore their local application

was to these historic assemblies. But that these Epistles have a wider, a prophetic application and signification is clear from several considerations. In the first place the number of the churches here addressed--seven--is significant.

There were other churches in Asia besides those addressed, but they are here ignored. The fact that Christ addressed Himself to seven, never more nor less, seems to argue that, in harmony with the uniform significance of this numeral, a complete outline of something is here presented. In the second place, there is some "mystery" connected with these seven Epistles as is clear from our Lord's words in Revelation 1:20. This is further borne out by the call which is sounded in each Epistle--"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"--intimating that they contain a special message heard only by those who are attuned to the 'still small voice.'

In the third place, the Order of these Epistles (in their contents) corresponds exactly with the history of the professing church and this agreement cannot be a mere coincidence, but must be due to Divine design). The first of these Epistles is addressed to the church at Ephesus and is recorded in Revelation 2:1-7. In it we have viewed the originating cause of the declension which began in the apostolic age. "Thou hast left thy first love" (v. 4)--the cooling of the church's affection for Christ was the source of all the evil that followed.

There was much outward zeal, but the heart was not right, and where love declines evil practices soon follow. Even so was it at the early date contemplated by the first of these seven Epistles, for at Ephesus we learn there were "false apostles" (v. 2) and "Nicolaitanes" whose deeds were 'hateful' to Christ and the Ephesians themselves (v. 6). "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent" (v. 5) shows the beginning of the downward path. In the second Epistle addressed to the church in Smyrna and recorded in Revelation 2:8-11, we have a prophetic picture which describes the conditions that prevailed from John's time till the beginning of the fourth century A.D.--a period of persecution and martyrdom.

Here we are shown a Judaizing Christianity spreading within the church, and mention is made of the "synagogue of Satan" (v. 9). In the Epistle to the third church--Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17)--we find the progress in evil is still more marked. The prophetic application of this Epistle carries us on to the days of Constantine when the church and the world joined hands. This unholy alliance was foreshadowed by the name of the church addressed, for Pergamos signifies a "marriage." Here we read of "Satan's seat" (v. 13--Greek "Satan's throne").

Here, too, mention is again made of the Nicolaitanes, but whereas in Ephesus it was the "deeds of the Nicolaitanes" (v. 6) that were mentioned, here it is the "doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" (v. 15)--false practices had now become articles of faith. Observe that at first the church "hated their deeds (v. 6), here their evil beliefs were tolerated and cherished. In the fourth Epistle--to Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29) we have disclosed a yet fouler condition of ecclesiastical corruption and are carried forward to the rise of Roman Catholicism, which is here termed "Jezebel"--"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and eat things sacrificed unto idols.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not" (vv. 20, 21). That "space" began at the Reformation period and has lasted till now, but the Papacy is still unchanged. In the fifth Epistle addressed to the church in Sardis (3:1-6) we are brought down to the days of Martin Luther and his contemporaries, when many of God's people were delivered from Popery. Observe here "Thou hast a

name" (v. 1). That name was "Protestantism" which defined both their claim and testimony.

But note further, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Thus it has proven: so it is today. Protestantism is now nothing more than a "name," its vitality has long since departed. How this latter-day condition was anticipated by the very terms of this Epistle may be seen by the language of verses 2 and 3--"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent."

Alas! that this admonition passed unheeded. "But, are all within the circle of Protestantism now spiritually dead?" it may be asked. No; and mark the prophetic accuracy of this Epistle--"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments" (v. 4)! In the sixth Epistle addressed to the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13) we are brought down to the last century. Three things are to be noted here. First, Philadelphia signifies "brotherly love" and it was during the last century particularly that this Christian grace was acknowledged and displayed.

Not until the nineteenth century was the truth of the Unity of the Church recovered and the common brotherhood of believers practically owned. Second, the Lord sets before this church an "open door" (v. 8), a door which He had opened Himself. This was the "door" which led to the Foreign Mission field, and it was not until last century that age-long barriers were so wonderfully removed by God and world-wide evangelism made practically easy. Third, "Thou hast a little strength" (v. 8) accurately describes the condition of the church during the last hundred years.

We turn now to consider at a little more length the seventh Epistle, addressed to the church of the Laodiceans (Rev. 3:14-22). This Epistle portrays the last state of the professing church on earth, a state characterized by high pretensions and self-sufficiency, but so utterly nauseous to Christ that He declares "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of My mouth" (vv. 15, 16).

The word Laodicea means "the rule of the laity or people." It is the people's church, not Christ's, for notice He is outside (v. 20), standing and knocking for admission. Its condition is described as "lukewarm:" it is neither one thing nor the other, partly hot and partly cold. How accurately this describes the present day condition of the professing church! A condition of mixture--mixed up with the world, claiming to be heavenly and yet clinging to everything that is earthly; bearing the name of Christ and yet misrepresenting Him and putting Him to an open shame.

Much religion but little life. Much activity but little vitality. Much doing but little accomplished. Much display but little power. Neither hot nor cold: neither out and out for God, nor out and out for the Devil. "Lukewarm," as though hot and cold water had been poured into the same vessel. This is exactly what we have in the churches today--intense worldliness and wickedness veneered over with humanitarian and religious pretenses. Another characteristic of Laodicea is the spirit of boasting--"Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (v. 17).

Loud and lofty are the pretensions of the professing church, but how shallow they really are! There is much ostentatious parading of resources, but it is an empty profession. There is self-conceit, showy attainments, architectural display, intellectual acquirements, influential numbers, but Christ is excluded! In this church (see the Epistle), unlike all the previous ones, there is nothing whatever in it that Christ commends--sad commentary upon its true condition! But this is merely negative: there is much in it that He

condemns--"and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (v. 17).

The church is utterly ignorant of its actual and deplorable state. Its leaders are crying "Peace and safety" when "sudden destruction" is upon them (1 Thess. 5:3). Unspeakably sad is this. Whenever there is recognition of our condition and our need, there is hope, for recognition and acknowledgement of weakness is the secret of strength (2 Cor. 12:9). But self-complacency is fatal. For self-righteousness there is no remedy. Though self-sufficient and self-righteous the professing church will shortly be "spued out" by the One whose name it bears.

Now observe particularly that this "Laodicean" Epistle is the final one of the series. It sets before us the last state of the professing church on earth. In keeping with this note the time-mark here. The Lord speaks of "supping" (v. 20). It is eventime. It is the closing meal of the day! The end is at hand. The church is feasting inside and the Savior is standing outside. Such was what was predicted eighteen centuries ago, and such is what we now witness in Christendom today.

Christ is now outside the professing church undesired, unheard, unknown. And, we repeat, this Epistle is the final one of the series, there is no eighth which follow it. The Laodicean condition is the last phase of apostate Christendom. Nought remains but its spewing out. The very next thing we read of in Revelation after the Laodicean Epistle is--"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither" etc. (4:1) which clearly symbolizes the catching up of the saints.

But we turn now to consider-- 4. The Prophecy of the Perilous Times. This prophecy is found in 2 Timothy 3 and is another delineation of the professing church in the last days. It is particularly to be noted that the verses we are about to consider, describe not mankind in general but Christendom in particular. Note now rite several lines in this picture, Lengthy comment is needless. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."

"Men shall be lovers of their own selves"--two things, closely connected, are referred to: selfishness and egotism. Self-lovers! Was there ever a time when there was so much self-seeking and self-pleasing, and so little self-sacrifice by professing Christians? "Covetous"--money-lovers. What fortunes are now amassed by those who claim to be not their own but bought with a price! Our average church-member is as greedy and grasping as the worldling. "Boasters"--intellectual boasting--laying claim to the possession of a wisdom and scholarship unknown to our forefathers; ecclesiastical boasting, evidenced in denominational pride; and what is most obnoxious of all, spiritual boasting--the profession of superior piety, the advertising of a "victorious life," "baptism of the Spirit," "sinless perfection," etc.

"Proud"--proud of their culture, liberality and broadmindedness. How different from the One who said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart." "Blasphemers"--Christian Scientists(?), Russellites, Higher Critics, etc. "Disobedient to parents." When was this deplorable sign of insubordination so rife as it is today? Instead of parents ruling their children, children now rule their parents, and, of course, the parents are to blame. This failure to exercise parental authority, this rebellion in the young which will brook no restraint, is the certain forerunner of the downfall of the State, fostering as it does, the spirit of lawlessness.

"Unthankful"--temporal blessings received as a matter of course without any recognition of their Giver. God's providential mercies unappreciated. Returning of thanks at mealtime, almost entirely a thing of the past. "Unholy" which has reference to the utter absence of separation from the world: the disappearance of the Nazarite spirit. Behold further characteristics of the Perilous Times--"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good.

Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). It is needless to enlarge upon each separate item, but mark the first and the last of those enumerated here. "Without natural affection." How terribly this is exemplified today in the enormous increase of divorces, in the abandonment of their infant offspring by unnatural mothers, and in the neglect of the poor, the sick, the aged! "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." See our church-members on the Lord's day, preferring a ride in their automobiles to the assembling of themselves together with the people of God.

Mark them on prayer-meeting nights at the picture-shows instead of at the throne of grace. And witness the musical programs, the entertainments, the ice-cream suppers, etc., etc., held in our church-houses. "But," it may be asked, "have not these things always been true of men in general?" Perhaps so, more or less, though never to the same extent as now. But these verses do not describe "general conditions," they depict Christendom as it exists in the "last days." This is clear from the next verse--"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (v. 5).

There is music but it is of the siren kind, not the singing, and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. There is eloquence but it is the wisdom which man's words teacheth, and not that which speaks for God and wins souls. There is fervor but it is the heat of carnal excitement born of novelty and sensationalism, and not that which cometh down from above. There is zeal, but it is without knowledge. There is a demand for righteousness, but it is civic and social righteousness and not the righteousness of God.

There is love but it is a sickly sentimentality and not that which is the fulfilling of the law. There is gospel-preaching, but it is "another gospel" and not the gospel of the grace of God. There is much religion, but it is lacking in life. There are notorious evangelistic campaigns, but they are devoid of spirituality. There is much ritualistic performance but it is a form of godliness without its power. "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts" (v. 6).

We believe the reference is to Mormonism, yet the principle is of still wider application. How striking it is that we should read of "silly women" in this inspired list of "last days" characteristics! How remarkably this is fulfilled in modern Feminism! Observe the words "led away with divers lusts," which might be freely rendered "ambitious desires." This craving for publicity, this deplorable masculinity, this denial of man's headship, this usurping of authority, is one of the most striking Signs of the Times.

We refer, not only to the modern Suffragette movement which makes every self-respecting woman blush for shame at the immodesty of her sisters, but also to the attitude and position taken by so many "silly women" in the churches. How sad it is to see the plain command of God--"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak" (1 Cor. 14:84)--now so generally disregarded. Today there are not a few who unblushingly denounce the inspired apostle as "an old bachelor with narrow ideas" (Ironsides).

Now mark that what we have been considering above is a part of a Divinely drawn picture describing the Perilous Times of the "last days." How clear it is that the Perilous Times are now upon us, Times that are

"perilous" to the souls of God's people "perilous" to the spread of the Gospel, "perilous" to the whole of Christendom. How evident it is to those who have eyes to see that we have already entered into the "last days." And how dark are the immediate prospects for the world!

Take note of one other item in this striking prophecy--"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Surely moral conditions cannot get much worse than they are now. Immorality has come in like a flood which is ever swelling and widening its course. "Uncleanness is rampant. There is an army of over thirty thousand painted prostitutes in Chicago alone. This sin of impurity, the greatest of the age, is literally undermining and honeycombing the nations till they are now tottering to their fall." (R.

V. Miller). How true this statement is appears from a recent speech made by Secretary Daniels of the U. S. Navy. In the course of an address which he delivered before the Clinical Congress of Surgeons of North America he said:--"There is not an army in the field whose effectiveness is not reduced by reason of immoral diseases. The navy suffers likewise and business halts because venereal diseases destroy the manhood of workmen and fighters. During the last statistical year men of the American Navy lost 141,387 days' sickness from a small group of absolutely preventable diseases contracted by sin.

This means that every day throughout the year there were 456 men disabled by this disgraceful malady. In the navy of 1915 there were admitted for treatment for venereal diseases 112 persons in every 1,000 and in the army 84 for every 1,000. In civil life the number afflicted is quite as large proportionately as in the military service. It has been printed that Hecht of Vienna, stated that at one time the equivalent of three entire Austrian divisions of 60,000 men was under treatment for venereal diseases, while the German army in Belgium, representing only a small part of the total German forces, is reported during the first five months of its occupation to have furnished 35,000 such patients.

Canadian and Australian officers have deplored the ravages of this disease. The late figures from the British army gave 78,000 cases, and all other countries have also been weakened." Surely such appalling figures as these, furnished by so eminent an authority, declare plainly that the "Perilous Times" of the "last days" are upon us! Does some one ask, What will be the outcome? We answer, the same as of old. God still lives and reigns, and just as surely as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for similar wickedness, so surely shall He pour out His indignation and wrath upon the present generation of evil-doers.

Yea, He has already begun to do so, and this leads us to consider -- 5. The Overturning which is visible on every hand. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is" (Ezek. 21:27.) In close accord with this prophecy through Ezekiel is the word recorded in Haggai 2:6, 7--"For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all tutions, and the Desire of all nations shall come."

Note carefully the coupling of these two things together--the coming of the Desire of all nations (the Lord Jesus), and the shaking of all nations. Surely this is just what we see going on before our eyes today! Verily, God is now 'shaking' and 'overturning' everything that is on earth. What has been the watchword and catchword that has rung in our ears during the last decade? Reform! Reform! Reform! Governments must be reformed. Churches must be reformed. Creeds must be reformed.

The Bible must be reformed, and conformed to "modern thought." Schools must be reformed. Everything must be reformed. The marriage-laws and divorce-laws must be reformed and deformed. What does all this indicate? Nothing is any longer right. This demand for reform is not merely local, it is not confined to

some coterie of enthusiasts. It is worldwide. It is enveloping the earth. It has swept over Europe and across this continent, and has now reached the lethargic East. In Turkey and Egypt, in Japan and China, in Mesopotamia and India, in Asia and Africa, peoples who have been stagnant for centuries are now aroused, and the cry is going forth--Down with the old regime; Down with ancient institutions.

Down with everything which brooks restraint. Never before were such conflicting forces at work. Never before were the foundations of society so seriously threatened. "I will shake all nations"--surely the appointed time for this is now here. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn"--truly this is exactly what God is doing today. Revolution is in the air, but those who are able to read the Signs of the Times can see that revolution is moving rapidly toward dissolution, the dissolution of the old order.

Closely connected with the overturning of ancient institutions we may consider-- 6. The present Distress of Nations. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them with fear, and for looking after those things which are coming to pass on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25, 26). As we have already remarked more than once, prophecy invariably has a double fulfillment at least, and so we believe it is with the one just quoted.

Directly, it has reference to conditions that will prevail during the Great Tribulation which immediately precedes the return of the Lord to the earth itself, but there is much to be said in favor of giving this prediction a present-day application. It agrees exactly with the conditions which now exist. Mark five of the characteristics here enumerated:-- First, "Distress of nations." How well these words describe the well-nigh universal groaning and anguish of mankind! "Distress" is now no longer confined to any one people but is international and earth-wide in its reach.

The "distress" and suffering caused by the exorbitant cost of living when it is becoming more and more difficult to secure even the bare necessities of life. The "distress" occasioned by increasing taxation and the accumulation of national debts which must prove intolerable burdens for future generations to bear. The "distress" caused by shortage of fuel and food-stuffs so that one half of the world is living upon short rations. The "distress" of bereavement which is now in millions of homes which mourn the loss of loved ones slain in battle.

Second, "with perplexity." Statesmen unable to discover any way out of present difficulties. Men of Solomonic astuteness at their wits' end, fearful of what they see approaching and powerless to hinder and prevent it. Problems between capital and labor becoming more acute and insoluble. Situations arising which the wisest of our statesmen, despite all our boasted enlightenment and progress, are unable to cope with successfully. "Perplexity" by reason of political corruption, economic agitations, and revolutionary troubles.

Third, "the sea and the waves roaring." In Scripture, the sea is used to figure the peoples of the earth which, away from God, know no rest. Like the sea, the masses today are in a seething turmoil. Everywhere there is fermentation and dissatisfaction. When were human politics so confused, so contradictory, so threatening as they are now? When was law so utterly impotent to restrain the violent passions of men? Every day brings new indications of disquietude and convulsion. Every government on earth is being shaken to its very foundations.

Mark the political changes which almost weekly take place in the great world powers. The time for listless indifference is gone. No longer may we quietly fold our hands and take our ease. There is among the

nations a spirit of restlessness, insubordination, anarchy; a consuming desire to overthrow every established system which is too deeply rooted, too furious, too general, to be withstood, it is something more than a passing tumult or the frenzy of an hour. Every day it is gathering strength and ere long it will burst every bound that legislation can devise.

The waves of human passion are rising higher and higher, and threaten to swamp the landmarks of the ancients and take possession of the whole earth. Fourth, "Men's hearts failing them with fear, and for looking for those things which are coming on the earth." We live in a day of unprecedented agitation and unparalleled tribulation. Conditions on earth have now reached such a pass that no human skill can steer clear of the mighty maelstrom which is rapidly drawing all nations within its awful whirl.

Human society is becoming panic-stricken. Heart failure both physically and morally is seizing thousands of victims. Little wonder that suicides are increasing at such an alarming rate. Men's hearts are "failing them." And well they may. Confidence between man and man has disappeared. Friendships have become barren formalities, little, more than selfish conveniences. Human compassion is no more. Conscience is dead, and men are giving up in hopeless despair as they discern still worse evils presaged by present-day conditions.

Feverish eyes are moving to and fro in dread expectation of the approaching total collapse of civilization. Fifth, "the powers of heaven shall be shaken." In Scripture the powers of nature are frequently used symbolically. "Mountains" figure "Kingdoms" (Dan. 2:35; Jeremiah 51:25); "waters" represent "peoples" (Rev. 17:11); and the sun, moon, and stars, typify human governments (Rev. 12:1). In the Great Tribulation the physical "powers of heaven will be literally "shaken," but we take it that the present-day application of our text is to be regarded symbolically, having reference to human governments.

And when were the political heavens so "shaken" as they are today? Note the development of the "Young Turk" Party in Turkey. Mark the growing popularity of a revolutionary Socialism. Witness the revolution in Portugal, and the yet more recent revolutions in Mexico, China and Russia. Ancient dynasties are being overthrown; thrones are tottering; kingdoms are being broken up. The very cement by which human society has been welded together is corroded so that Civilization is now like walls without mortar--ready to fall to pieces.

What is the message voiced by these universal conditions? What do they say to the children of God? The answer to these questions is found in the same passage where these things are described--"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Let us next consider-- 7. The conflict between Capital and Labor. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are 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. Behold, the hire of the laborers 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. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the

coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (Jam. 5:1-9). Observe that the above passage makes express reference to "the last days" (v. 3).

It tells us that in these "last days" there shall be a class of "rich men" (v. 1). It speaks of them having "heaped treasure together" (v. 3). It declares that their riches have been acquired by "fraud" (v. 4). It makes mention of them having "condemned and killed the just" (v. 6). It intimates that their rapacity and dishonesty will evoke and provoke a loud "cry" (v. 4) from their victims. It denounces them for having "lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton" (v. 5).

It pictures the sorrows and anguish brought upon the laboring classes whose cries have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts (v. 4). It announces the terrible judgments of heaven which shall yet descend upon them for their crimes, and predicts that they shall "weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them" (v. 1). What human wisdom could have delineated so faithfully the present conflict between capital and labor! What mortal mind could have foretold, almost two thousand years beforehand, the amazing and heart-rendering si

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