

"THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM."

While it is true that the child of God must walk by faith and not by sight, it is blessed to find that the wisdom and love of our Father has provided crutches for us to lean upon when faith is weak or lame; for, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," even though they may be weak and lame, as we all are, more or less, owing to the hereditary taint of sin. We need help according to the exigencies of the hour and the times in which we live.

Under the Jewish dispensation men had to contend against flesh and blood; and though that is still true to a certain extent, yet our chief warfare now, during the Gospel age, is "not with blood and flesh," but "with the potentates of this darkness, with the spiritual things of wickedness in the heavenlies." (Eph. 6:12. – Dia.) This began to be the case when Paul made this statement, and it is growing more emphatic every hour.

The time was when the foe of man was visible, and, though some forms of evil are still visible, yet, as we said, the great conflict of the Christian is with an invisible power. The foe is growing more subtle and more intangible, but not the less real, for he knows "he has a short season" (Rev. 12:12); therefore, those who conquer must do so "through the BLOOD of the LAMB and through the word of their testimony" and "love not their life to death" (11th verse). Anciently, when God communicated with man he made use of some visible means, and when he sent the Redeemer into the world he took the form of man, having "a body prepared" for him. But now, though some of his agencies are still visible, yet the mighty powers are invisible, and the visible agencies have but little power,

comparatively, and would have none, were it not communicated by the invisible.

Some men have no faith in the invisible, and can look only at the things which are seen. They have but little faith in an invisible, intelligent, Almighty personality called God, and none in an invisible, intelligent, mighty personality called Satan; and yet the invisible things of both are "clearly seen, being perceived by the things which are made."

Some who have a little faith in the invisible occasionally look away to the unseen, and feebly believe in them, while their principal interest and faith centers in the seen, the material, the temporal.

Man has always had some helps for his faith in the invisible, but our Father has graciously provided more of such helps as the time approaches for us to enter the unseen "house not made with hands."

We are already beginning to live, to a goodly extent, in the invisible. We do not now refer to our thoughts of God and invisible things in the sense in which it is said by the Apostle – "Our conversation is in heaven" – nor to supposed intercourse with spirits, but to the fact that we are standing not only where the "ends of the world" (ages) meet and blend, but where two domains, the visible and the invisible, mingle. The door of the invisible stands ajar, and we peer into the domain of unseen things. Many of the affairs of this **[R479 : page 4]** life are now being conducted by means of invisible powers.

It is but little more than a century since invisible forces came into practical use in the ordinary affairs of life, if we except the unseen power called life, which animates all living beings. But now these unseen powers have become such constant companions that we seem to be familiar with them, and they are so intimately

associated with visible things that we almost forget that they are invisible, having never been seen by mortal eye, and probably never will be. [R480 : page 4]

When we are rapidly drawn from place to place by the power of steam, we hardly realize that it is an invisible and silent power. We think we see and hear it; but when we see it, it is dead, and what we hear is its dying groan. Its effects may be seen and heard, but the power is silent and invisible.

The mysterious power of electricity which is supposed to pervade space, and is thought by some to be the secret principle of life, has lately been our newsboy, is now our speaking-trumpet, by which we hold a pleasant conversation with our friends a thousand miles away, and the aged and infirm may, at home, listen to the church services in a distant city. This same power now gives us almost the light of day in our streets and dwellings, and proposes to be general house servant and detective.

Who can step up to the telephone for the first time and converse with a friend a hundred miles away as easily and pleasantly as though he stood by his side, hearing all the modulations of his voice and his subdued laugh in such a manner that he recognizes that it is his friend, and not feel as though he stood in the open door-way leading to the "unknown land?" Though we cannot demonstrate the connection between these wonderful developments and the stately stepplings of our God, yet there are so many things which so strongly indicate the connection that it is easier for us to believe it than to disbelieve it.

There seems to be a striking coincidence between the words of Jesus in Matt. 24:27 and what has and is taking place at this time, when those who are looking for the fulfillment of his words discern that "the time is at hand." "For, as the lightning cometh out of the

East and shineth even unto the West, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Father Miller, upon whom so much reproach has fallen (but who was a devoted Christian man of irreproachable Christian character), saw that there was an important, prophetic point in about 1843, and supposed that Christ was to personally and visibly appear to the world at that time, and that it would be the closing up of earthly affairs; but, when disappointment came, unlike many of his followers, he was not despondent, but believed that the Lord would lead his people to a further understanding of his word and designs, and that in the fullness of time he would come.

That awakening set many Christians to examining the Word with extreme care, the result of which is that many interesting parallels between the Jewish and Gospel ages have been discovered, and it is now convincingly known that the first step toward the second advent did take place at or about that time, but not in the manner that Father Miller had expected. If he had understood "the plan of the ages," he would have known better why Christ was to come again, and that God's first lesson to the world, that of making known the exceeding sinfulness of sin, had not yet been finished.

That which was "finished" upon the cross being the reconciling of the world "to God by the death of his Son," after which, "being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If he had understood that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and that from among the reconciled ones he was "taking out a people for his name," and that when taken out he would "come again and receive them unto himself," and that this had all been done for a purpose, which would be made known "in the ages to come, showing forth the exceeding riches of his grace; we say if he had known this (not then due, as we understand), he could have had a better understanding of the manner of his coming, and would not

have expected him to come in a manner which would make it proper for men to say "lo, here is Christ or lo, there." (See "Food," pages 27 and 56: "Why will there be a second advent," and "How will Christ come.") In connection with what has been said above, including the words of Jesus referred to (Matt. 24:27), let us see if any notable events mark the time of expectation.

In 1833 "Father Miller" began to lecture upon the second coming of Christ, and premised that it would take place in the fall of 1843. In 1832 the electro-magnetic telegraph was conceived by Morse while on a transatlantic voyage, and it was born in 1835, "when he put up a half mile of wire in coils around a room and exhibited a telegraph in operation."

"In the morning of March 4th, 1843, he was startled with the announcement that the desired aid of Congress had been obtained in the midnight hour of the expiring session, and thirty thousand dollars placed at his disposal for his experimental essay between Washington and Baltimore. In 1844 the work was completed and demonstrated to the world.

In 1843, it is believed, occurs the first suggestion of the project of the Atlantic Telegraph (American Cyclopaedia, Vol. II, page 850), and a few years after was realized the fact (whatever bearing it may have upon the subject) that real lightning, conveying intelligence, shone from "the East" to "the West," and vice versa.

While we would not be fanciful nor morbidly imaginative, we would not be too slow to mark the striking coincidence of events which seem to indicate the fulfillment of prophecy. Could any one who is most familiar with the railroads of the present day give, in so few words, so clear and vivid a description of locomotives and railroad carriages as is given in the second chapter of the prophecy of Nahum in these words? "The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir-trees shall be terribly

shaken. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broadways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." But, says one, that is a prophecy concerning Nineveh. Very true, but like most or all of the prophecies, it doubtless has a two-fold significance.

Like the prophecy concerning Babylon, which is generally understood to refer to the apostate Church of Rome as well as to the ancient city of that name, so this prophecy is understood by some, and with good reason, we think, to refer to the world, and to conditions affecting both the church and the world, and has an application in this time. But whatever may be thought concerning it, one thing is evident, that no carriages or chariots in Nineveh, nor anywhere in the history of the world, would so well answer to the description here given.

See how they "rage in the streets"; notice how, at their "couplings," they "jostle one against another in the broad ways"; and how, in the night time, they "seem like torches," and the very same forceful, though exaggerating term, is used by the prophet to convey an idea of their speed: "They shall run like the lightnings." So the modern term has been applied to a fast train, "the lightning train."

But, is some one saying, "How about the 'fir-trees,' are they not as symbolical as the rest?" Certainly. In Rev. 2:7 there is an evident reference to Jesus Christ as being "the tree of life," harmonizing with the statement which he made in John 6:55: "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." So these fir-trees, referred to by the prophet, we understand to be a class of people, and as the fir-tree is spoken of in scripture as a "goodly" tree and "choice," and is evergreen, and as the Lord's people are spoken of in Isaiah 14:8 as "fir-trees," we conclude that in this prophecy his people are represented by the fir-trees; and, we ask, are not these "fir-trees terribly shaken" just now?

Ye "trees of righteousness," who are being bent and "terribly shaken" before the storm blast, begin the 61st chapter of Isaiah and dwell with loving gratitude and joy upon the 3d verse. In harmony with this, we find in Daniel 12:4 the statement that in "the time of the end many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased."

But, some say, that is only a general statement; men have always run to and fro, and knowledge has been increasing from the beginning. Very good, but do not events particularly emphasize that statement just now? You know very well that men never could run to and fro as they can now; in comparison, they had to crawl to and fro.

No longer ago than when "Father Miller" and his contemporaries were boys it would have taken a man as long to travel from New York to Ohio and back as it does now to travel around the world; and only one decade ago, with all the helps for faith in unseen things which were in the world then, if any man had soberly stated that within ten years we could sit in our easy chair in New York City and talk, not by signs, but by word of mouth, to friends in Cleveland, Ohio, it would have been said that he was extravagant in thought, or deprived of reason.

The telephone, substantially as it is now, was first practically introduced in the fall of 1877, and the following spring of 1878 was the time when, we understand, favor to Israel was due to begin, and, according to the Berlin treaty, actually did begin.

Three thoughts are (to "the watcher") noticeable here, whether significant or not. The Jewish year commences in October, and in the same year and at the time which marks the ending of the age, according to our understanding of the chronology, two noted events took place, whether they have any connection or not, they are historical events; the introduction of the Electric Telephone and the Berlin Treaty. Those at least who love his appearing are pleased to

note in these things the fulfillment of at [R481 : page 4] least one prophecy: "Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased." ... "Many shall be purified and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." They see, also, that these things have been "closed up and sealed until the time of the end."

In conclusion, we would say with another (H. Grattan Guinness), that we "would strongly deprecate the false and foolish popular notion, that all study of prophecy is unpracticable – a notion too often propagated by passing, but mischievously influential allusions to the subject, from pulpit, platform and press, made by those who know little either of it or of its effects.

It ought to be a sufficient rebuke to the levity that hazards such an assertion, or admits such an idea, to recall the facts, that one-third of the Bible consists of prophecy, and that our Lord and Master said, "Search the Scriptures" – not a portion of them only.

The apostle Peter expressly tells us that we do well to take heed to the "More sure word of prophecy, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise."

Is it unpractical to make use of a good lantern in a pitch-dark night in traversing a dangerous road? Or is it not rather unpractical and unreasonable to attempt to dispense with it? Noah was a student of unfulfilled prophecy, and Scripture presents no more practical preacher of righteousness than he was. All the prophets were students, too, of their own and of each other's predictions, and especially of their chronological predictions.

"The prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify" (1 Peter 1:10). Daniel was a student of unfulfilled prophecy, yet he was not only a practical statesman, but a man of

singular holiness, classed with Noah and Job as one of the most righteous of men. There is everything in the nature of the study to make those who pursue it both practical and holy. It imbues the mind with the counsels and judgment of God about the affairs and the events of earth; it reveals what shall be, and thereby lessons the inordinate power of that which is now, bringing the spirit under the influence of things unseen and eternal, and thereby weakening that of things seen and temporal. It affords to hope much needed food, lacking which we must languish and grow feeble, and to faith and love peculiar stimulus and enjoyment.

Without intelligent acquaintance with the teaching of the prophetic word, no man of God is or can be thoroughly furnished to all good works, for it is a part of the "all Scripture" given by inspiration, and is profitable for the purpose of rendering him so.

Perhaps one reason for the prevailing neglect of prophetic exposition and preaching will be found, on reflection, to lie, not in the fact that it is unpractical, but rather in the fact that it is so peculiarly practical that few have the boldness and courage to face the ridicule, opposition and contempt it is sure to incur in the world. So far from the study and exposition of the prophetic word being profitless and vain, we believe it is impossible to estimate the loss sustained by the church, or the injury done to the world, by the very general and unjustifiable neglect of it. Is it not our duty to declare the whole counsel of God? Those who have carefully looked into this subject, solemnly and with good ground, believe that the word we are commanded to preach is full of evidence that the long predicted and long delayed judgments on all the powers of evil which are not only already begun, but are fast accomplishing before our eyes, are to issue, and that speedily, in such a burning of Babylon the Great as will light up all Christendom with the lurid glow, the accompaniment of the glorious advent of the King of kings; yet

multitudes of Christian teachers, without even taking the trouble of examining into the subject, still preach the contrary, or imply it in their preaching, not from well-grounded convictions of its truth, but from educational prejudice or mere force of habit.

Is this right? Ought not every minister of the Word to study for himself the teachings of Scripture until he is satisfied that he has attained the truth on this momentous theme?

For, if we are right, if there be unequivocal evidence in the inspired volume, evidence that no previous generation of Christians was in a position to appreciate, as Christians can now, that the day of Christ is at hand – if we be right in believing that scarcely a single prophecy in the whole Bible, relating to events prior to the second advent of Christ, remains unfulfilled – if we be right, then surely every pulpit in the land should be ringing with timely testimony to these truths; surely these solemn and momentous facts ought not, in the preaching of any of God's faithful ministers throughout the world, to be passed by in silence. And who, that has not studied the subject, can be in a position to say that we are not right – that these things are not so?

May such a spirit, as the Bereans of old had, be granted to the Christians of this generation, that they may diligently search the "more sure word of prophecy," and draw direct from that sacred fountain the truth as to the fast approaching future which God has graciously revealed.

It seems hardly necessary for us to add that no faint and feeble efforts in the study of the Word will be sufficient to "thoroughly furnish" us, for many will and do seek it in that way, and no man who shall "strive to enter in at the straight gate," who does not take pains to understand his "Master's will" so as to "strive lawfully," can expect to be crowned (2 Tim. 2:5).

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"NOT every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.)
