

## THE SIGN OF HIS PRESENCE.

"What shall be the *sign* [indication] of thy *presence*, and of the consummation of the age?" Matt. 24:3. – *Diaglott.*

Perhaps remembering that Jesus' first advent had been obscure and unrecognized by many, so that even John who baptized and announced him sent and inquired, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" the disciples may have been wondering whether the second coming of Jesus would be likewise obscure and unrecognized, and whether some might not at the time of the second presence, as in their day, be ignorant of the Lord's presence. Or, their query may have been suggested by Jesus' answer to the Pharisees when questioned about the kingdom to come – "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [outward demonstration and show], neither shall they say, Lo here! or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Luke 17:20,21. R.V. margin.

Whatever induced the question, it is evident from the Lord's answer, that they suspicioned that he might be present yet unrecognized by the world, and possibly by even his saints, unless some expected sign should indicate his presence.

Some who overlook the Lord's statement that the kingdom of heaven cometh not with outward demonstration, and who think that the second advent of Jesus will be accompanied with wonderful outward demonstration, put a very forced construction upon this word *sign*, and look for some visible manifestation in the sky. With their ideas of the manner of Christ's coming, no sign would be necessary. But such an interpretation of the word *sign* is out of harmony with common as well as Scriptural usage. Clouds are a sign of storm and rain; smoke is a sign of fire; frost and snow may be *signs* of cold weather; falling foliage is a sign of autumn. Likewise when the Lord is *present*, and the specially

appointed work of his presence is in progress, those works will, to those who can appreciate them, be a *sign* of his presence.

All Christians should be most deeply interested in this question, What shall be the *sign*, indication or evidence of the Lord's presence and the closing of our age? In his answer, the Master's first aim was to put us (for his words were specially for all the Church) on guard against some who would assume his name (*Christ-ians*), and deceive many by saying that the *kingdom of God* has come; that they are the DELIVERER or Messiah, and that their dominion is the kingdom of God. He says: "Beware that no one *deceive* you, for many will assume my name saying, I am the Messiah." (Matt. 24:5 – *Diaglott.*) They say, We are Christ's vice-gerents, his representatives; our Church is the *body* of Christ, and his rightful and promised representative to rule and conquer the world.

As the Lord forewarned, we can see that many have assumed his name, claimed to be his body, and as such the right to rule, and that his kingdom had come. We see this taught not only by Papacy, but by all her daughters – especially those united with the governments of Europe, and who claim that in them *God's kingdom has come*. In harmony with this claim is the addition made to the original Lord's Prayer, by which it was made to read, "For *thine* IS THE *kingdom*, and the power and the glory forever." These words do not occur in either the Sinaitic or Vatican manuscripts.

Passing on, Jesus tells that a long period must elapse, with its wars, and commotions, persecutions, betrayals, false teachers, etc., and that "the love of the many will cool" (become lukewarm, Rev. 3:16), and that patient endurance to the close of the race is needful for all running for the prize held out in this Gospel age. Before this age shall have fully ended the glad tidings of the kingdom will be published in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then will the end come.

These remarks of the Master are in place and needful, but we must remember that they are only a preface to his answer to the question

asked, which he now proceeds to answer, saying: "When ye therefore shall SEE *the abomination of desolation* spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place" (v. 15). Here was to be a *sign*, which when seen, would be an indication of time for a certain action, because, as we shall see, it will be a part of the evidence, or sign of the *presence* of the Son of man.

The setting of the abomination is not the sign, but the recognition, or discernment of the abomination as such, and of its improper place, is a sign that greatly increased *light* is shining, that knowledge is increased, which is elsewhere stated to be evidence of "the time of the end," Dan. 12:4. [R711 : page 3]

The abomination spoken of by Daniel, and again by Paul, is the false system of systems which, assuming the name of Christ, have misrepresented the character, plans and Word of God, and deceived many. It includes not only the mother system, Papacy, but the daughters as well, for she is the mother of *abominations* as well as an abomination herself; and the entire abomination system being ONE, and of the same spirit, it is so referred to by Jesus, Daniel and Paul. It is "Babylon the great," "the mystery of Iniquity," the "Abomination of the earth." Rev. 17:5 and 2 Thes. 2:7, Dan. 12:11.

The "Mystery of Iniquity" came into place gradually, and it was not until it had sat for a long time in the holy place, ruling and governing it, that its abominable and detestable character was seen, and still it is not seen by all the saints, many of whom still bow to the teachings and commands of that system which God calls abominable.

The god of this world – Satan – has by many devices blinded the eyes of many, while exalting and keeping in power this system, which is "*after*" or like him, whose child it is. When his power begins to fail, because the stronger than he begins to spoil his house (Matt. 12:29), then this system will begin to be seen, to be *revealed* and recognized in its true character as "The Mystery of Iniquity." Of this time when the abomination shall be *seen* occupying and ruling in the Church, the

apostle says: "**Then** shall that wicked be **revealed** [literally **uncovered** or exposed] whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" [literally – destroy with the bright shining of the **present** one]. 2 Thes. 2:3-6.

This accords perfectly with Jesus' words: "When ye shall **see** the abomination;" that is, when the mask shall be pulled off and you shall be enabled to **see** "The Mystery of Iniquity" as such, **then** you may know that you are in the consummation of the age, in "the time of the end." Your **knowledge** will be the **sign** of this.

The significance of the statement, "**Then** let them which be in Judea flee," etc., we do not here refer to, as it has already been explained, merely pausing to remark that this prophecy evidently referred to more than the destruction of Jerusalem and the time of trouble which came upon that land in A.D. 70. Proof of this is furnished by comparing verse 21 with Danl. 12:1. This **greatest** time of trouble is at the close of the Gospel age unquestionably, though the closing features of the Jewish age were typical of it.

"Then [in "the time of the end"] if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or there, believe it not... Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert, go not forth; behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not" (vs. 23,26). Why should not Jesus' disciples at such a time [now], knowing that they are living in "the time of the end" expect Jesus? Why not then be waiting for a Philip or a Peter to meet us and say, We have found the Lord, Lo here, or lo there? The answer is, that at his second advent he will not be a man limited to place, but a spiritual being, personally present, yet invisible because spiritual, as all spiritual bodies are invisible to human sight. As the lightning (the electric current or fluid) unseen, yet powerful, its **presence** widely manifested by the **light which it causes**, "**so** shall also the **presence** (improperly translated **coming**) of the Son of man be." ver. 27.

In verse 28 Jesus teaches that instead of going out to seek him in the wilderness, etc., we shall be gathered together, not physically, but mentally, that all who are his shall come to recognize his presence by the instinct of their new nature, being brought together by the mutual apprehension of the truth as eagles would be drawn to their food.

"And he shall send his angels [messengers – servants] with a great sound of a trumpet [the "seventh trump," or "trump of God"], and they shall gather together [into union and oneness] his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. [The church nominal is the present heavens; the little flock, when by-and-by exalted, will be the new heavens.] The little flock as eagles are being gathered from out the present "heavens." "From the four winds" from every direction; from all denominations. Matt. 24:28 and 31.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, etc. (v. 29). Verses 29 and 30 go back to take up the chain of events belonging to "the time of the end" as they relate to the world. That the tribulation referred to is that of verse 9, and not that of verse 21 and Dan. 12:1, will be evident as we proceed. [In those days before they end, 1798], but *after* the tribulation of those days – as Papal persecutions and that of other abominations (systems) began to draw to a close – in 1780 the "Dark Day" occurred, concerning which we read:

"May 19th, 1780. – The darkness commenced between 10 and 11 A.M., and continued until the middle of the next night. The wind was from the south-west, and the darkness appeared to come with the clouds, drifting from that point. It covered the country from New Jersey to Maine, and appears to have been greatest in Massachusetts and the adjoining portion of New Hampshire; yet it was intense in Connecticut and Rhode Island. It was much less in New York, and in New Jersey it was not particularly noticed. Where it most prevailed it was impossible to read ordinary print, or read the time by a watch or clock, or do ordinary business without artificial light. An intelligent observer says:

'Candles were lighted in the houses; fowls retired to roost; the cocks were crowing all around as at break of day; objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance; and everything bore the appearance and gloom of night.'

– *Library Universal Knowledge, page 647.*

Again we quote:

"The Dark Day, May 19, 1780. – So called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending all over New England. In some places persons could not see to read common print in the open air for several hours together. Birds sang their evening song, disappeared, and became silent; fowls went to roost; cattle sought the barn-yard; and candles were lighted in the houses. The obscuration began about ten o'clock in the morning, and continued till the middle of the next night, but with differences of degree and duration in different places. For several days previous the wind had been variable, but chiefly from the south-west and north-east. The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known."

– *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary Explanatory and Pronouncing Vocabulary, p. 1604.*

Herschel says: "The Dark Day in Northern America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read of with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain."

"In the month of May, 1780, there was a very terrific dark day in New England, when 'all faces seemed to gather blackness,' and the people were filled with fear. There was great distress in the village where Edward Lee lived; 'men's hearts failing them for fear' that the judgment day was at hand." – *Tract No. 379 of American Tract Society, Life of Edward Lee, of Massachusetts.*

The moon was correspondingly darkened at this time from the same causes, whatever they may have been.

In 1833 came the falling of the stars. Not the falling of "fixed stars," truly, for that which can fall is not fixed. Neither could stars many times larger than this earth fall upon it as a fig-tree casteth her unripe figs when shaken by a mighty wind (Rev. 6:13). Hence it is very evident that Jesus could not have meant these. But a remarkable meteoric shower, just such as fills the description, and the like of which is not recorded in history, did occur in November, 1833.

We quote the following account from "The American Cyclopaedia," Vol. XI., page 431:

"The year 1833 is memorable for the most magnificent display on record. This was on the night of November 12, and was visible over all the United States, and over a part of Mexico and the West India Islands. Together with the smaller shooting stars which fell like snowflakes and produced phosphorescent lines along their course, there were intermingled large fire-balls, which darted forth at intervals, describing in a few seconds an arc of 30 or 40 degrees. These left behind luminous trains, which remained in view several minutes, and sometimes half an hour or more. One of them, seen in North Carolina, appeared of larger size and greater brilliancy than the moon. Some of the luminous bodies were of irregular form, and remained stationary for a considerable time, emitting streams of light. At Niagara the exhibition was especially brilliant, and probably no spectacle so terribly grand and sublime was ever before beheld by man as that of the firmament descending in fiery torrents over the dark and roaring cataract. It was observed that the lines of all the meteors, if traced back, converged in one quarter of the heavens, which was *Leonis Majoris*; and this point accompanied the stars in their apparent motion westward, instead of moving with the earth toward the East. The source whence the meteors came was thus shown to be independent of the earth's relation, and exterior to our atmosphere."

Following this, we have had violent shakings of the heavens, or wind storms, the cyclones, etc., of our own day, which answer well to the statement, "The powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

But though we recognize in the events mentioned a *literal* fulfillment of Jesus' words, it is far from our opinion that this was their complete and only fulfillment, [R712 : page 3] or even the most important one. Though the literal meaning is real, and prominently marked, yet none the less real and marked is the meaning conveyed through these words as symbols. The darkening of the sun (symbolic) is the obscuring of the great central light of the gospel, which, even in the dark ages, never ceased to shine – and that central thought is *the Ransom*. It has been in the past, and to the little flock will continue to be the centre of light and life, around which every other interest revolves, and from which springs every living hope, and which is the author and mainspring of every green and precious promise. No discerning mind can fail to note the fact that in our day this great central fact of the gospel, the Ransom, is being darkened. [R712 : page 4]

So called "advanced thinkers," in all denominations, are fast either ignoring the Scriptures altogether, or else – far worse – mutilating them by wresting from them the *cross* and the *ransom*, attempting to "climb up some other way" and inviting others to do the same.

As we have heretofore shown, this error will prove very successful, and cause many to fall. Many of the brightest stars, the most eloquent and most esteemed in the present heavens, will fall. Alas! has not this begun?

The shaking of the heavens, as the Apostle indicates, "signifieth the *removing* of those things that are shaken, as of things" that are imperfect and of human construction (Heb. 12:27). So the present nominal church system shall be "shaken," says Jesus; be "removed," explains the writer of Hebrews; "pass away with a great noise" [commotion], adds Peter; Babylon shall be "cast as a great millstone into the sea," adds John the Revelator (Rev. 18:21); and thus all agree.



"THEN shall appear the *sign* [evidence] of the Son of Man in heaven." Some have imagined that the events mentioned above [the literal darkening of the sun, etc.] were the sign, but the language is explicit; after these events comes the *sign* here referred to. But notice: it is a sign to the *world*, not to the saints; they will have had evidence of the Lord's presence long before. Then shall appear the *sign* [evidence of the presence] of the Son of Man in heaven, in the new heavens – new spiritual powers then coming into control and supplanting the old shaking and falling spiritual powers. The passing away of present nominal church influence and power, will seriously affect all the tribes of earth. Already the wise and mighty of this world, such as Prince Bismarck, are beginning to see the value of the nominal church, with its threatenings of eternal torture, as a restraint upon the people; and as these systems are "shaken," it becomes the precursor of the overthrow of kingdoms and all organized society, for *earth* shall be shaken as well as the heavens. Heb. 12:26.

These shakings in the church nominal, and the raising up of new heavens or spiritual powers, BECOME A SIGN to the peoples of earth, that their course in evil, oppression and injustice is surely and swiftly drawing to a close. They see with dread the *changes* coming, being unable to discern what shall be the outcome. They see the mighty overturning power and mourn because of him (Christ) long before they realize that it is the Lord's doings, or that he wounds to heal and smites to bless.

But long before this – yes, before Babylon shall have completely fallen, and before these outward signs shall have convinced the world that great changes are in process – the saints, by taking heed to the sure word of prophecy, *know* of the *presence* of the Lord. He has not left them in darkness, that that day should come upon them as a thief (1 Thes. 5:4). And in this same connection the Lord tells us that as the fig tree putting forth leaves would be a sign of summer nigh, so likewise, when these things *begin* to come to pass, at the very first we should be in such a watching attitude that we would note the first indications of

the new rulership and the overturning of the institutions and systems condemned by our King.

What, then, is the sign of Jesus' presence? To some, sign was unnecessary; they being instructed by the sure word of prophecy were awake and looking, and when they saw the mystery of iniquity, Babylon, in the holy place, and heard from the Scriptures that she was cast off from favor, they said, This as well as prophecy tells me that the King is here, for this is his first work, to separate in the Church the wheat from the tares, and to "cast away" or "spew out" the unfit. Hence the words, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; come out of her my people," became corroborative of the Lord's presence, who shall destroy her by the *bright shining* of his *presence* (2 Thes. 2:8). The evidence of the King's *presence* is increasing, and soon all will be able to recognize that a new ruler has the control.

### **OTHER SIGNS.**

One of the signs which Jesus gave John when he asked, "Art thou he that should come?" – a sign that he, the true Messiah, was then present, was, "Go, tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Luke 7:20,23.

And when we remember that the first advent was but a *foretaste* of the blessings which the second advent was to bring in fullest, grandest measure, we cannot but suppose that *similar* manifestations will accompany Jesus' *second presence* in this world. Since now he is a spiritual being, and no longer human, we might reasonably expect that human agencies would be the channels by and through which the lame would be made to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the poor to have the real gospel, "good tidings," preached to them.

And is not this the case? Are not eyes and ears long closed by prejudice, superstition and human tradition being opened? Are not

those who have long been lame, and who have halted between the service of God and the devil, been healed by the truth? Is not the gospel, "*good* tidings," being preached to the poor and to them that have no money? Truly yes; the work now is the same as at the first advent, but in harmony with every other part, it is on a higher plane.

Undoubtedly those prophecies which refer to the blessings of the Millennial age, which tell of the blind eyes being opened and the deaf ears unstopped, refer primarily and chiefly to the opening of the eyes of the understanding, and the removal of the impediments of ignorance and prejudice from the hearing of faith, yet we know that restitution will bring with it also physical healing, and the two, mental and physical healings will go hand in hand throughout the world blessing the sin-crippled of earth in the name of him who bought them with his own precious blood.

This being the case, it should not, and does not, surprise us that now both phases of healing are in progress, and being blessed each to its class. Nor should it surprise us that different messengers or agencies are used in the different branches of the work. The one carrying a natural blessing to natural men, and the other bearing spiritual blessings to the spiritual. To every man his work.

And so it is. While we are busily engaged ministering the spiritual blessings, we note with pleasure the progress of physical blessings to natural men – the beginning of *restitution*. Truly wonderful and very gracious manifestations of God's power are the faith-healings of which we now so frequently hear, and in contact with which we are sometimes thrown, though to us not so precious, nor so refreshing, nor so frequent as the evidences of spiritual blessing with which we come in contact daily.

We call attention to the fact that the *nominal church* is entirely ignored, and stands unused of the Master in the distribution of either the physical or spiritual healings. She is neither cold nor hot, and is spewed out of the Lord's mouth and is no longer used as his agency or

mouthpiece. Would that she could see her blindness and would put on the eye salve, that she might realize her poverty and nakedness; but instead, she says, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Rev. 3:17.

Notice again, that the *physical* healings now, as at the first advent, are not performed upon the saints, but rather upon those not consecrated to sacrifice, and even among the worldly. Note the class now healed physically, and then read of those healed by Jesus and the disciples; they are alike. Jairus' daughter, the widow's son, the ruler's servant, the men at the pool, the ten lepers. Lazarus even is not mentioned as a disciple; none of the disciples were ever miraculously healed. Paul's sore eyes were not healed, though he besought the Lord on the subject thrice; Timothy had "often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23); Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death (Phil. 2:25,27), and Trophimus also (2 Tim. 4:20); yet there is no record of any faith-healing or miracle for their recovery. The saints have been treated physically, much as other men.

The reason of this is not difficult of apprehension. As with the Master it was said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," so it may be said of the saints: They may pray for and be the instruments in healing others, but themselves they cannot heal. They follow the Master's foot steps of sacrifice even unto death.

If Jesus had attempted to save his own life *after* having consecrated it to death, he would thereby have lost it, as well as have failed to become Redeemer of the race, since to violate his covenant would have been sin. So with those [R713 : page 4] who, being purged from sin, justified as men by Jesus' ransom, and who then have presented their *justified manhood* a living sacrifice – joining it in sacrifice with that of Jesus, to thus become sharers in the bearing of the sins of the *world*. They are then bound to and by their covenant, and when in harmony with that covenant, human honors, pleasures, comforts, health and life are surrendered, it would certainly be an

attempt to take back our sacrifice should we ask for human blessings and privileges to be restored to us, though we may ask these human blessings for any who have not consecrated them in sacrifice. Thus is it true of the body as it was of the head, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." "As he is so are *we* in this world." 1 Jno. 4:17.

### **TO ALL WE WOULD SAY.**

We are living in a favored and precious time, for though it is the hour of trial coming upon earth (Rev. 3:10), it is to those who can discern the Lord's presence, etc., a precious and favored time correspondingly. Jesus' first advent was a time similar – of trial to all Israel, and of special favor and blessing to every Israelite indeed. In reference to his presence Jesus said: "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have *desired* to see these things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Matt. 13:16,17.

Their privilege to hear from Jesus' lips "dark sayings" and "parables" was great, but how much greater is the present privilege of having the Master gird himself and cause us to sit down to meat and come forth to serve us (Luke 12:37), disclosing to us the mystery hid from ages and generations, and expounding to us his parables and dark sayings. Truly, the bright shining of the *present one* shall not only consume and destroy Babylon and all other systems of error which enslave the redeemed, but also enlightens, cheers and refreshes all in harmony with truth.

Now, as at the first advent, those who most quickly conform heart and life to Jesus' teachings will be soonest and most blessed, while those who like the Pharisees *will not* see, but on the contrary pervert the truths now due and oppose them, shall have their portion *with* the hypocrites in the fire of trouble now kindling.

The words of inspiration now applicable are, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his anger is kindled but a little. *Blessed* are all they that put their trust in him." Psalm 2:9-12. The kingdoms of earth that would *stand* should know that the present is but a brief space – a moment as it were before the conflict. Now or never (as nations) they may recognize the new King by abandoning oppression and establishing justice – righteousness. Now is the time to concede to all men their natural rights, restore and remunerate for past wrongs, and agree with their adversary quickly. It is almost too late now to fill the chasm which the torrents of human passion daily make wider. But they will not heed, and shall be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel (Rev. 2:27). The word of the Lord does not profit them, not being believed. Nevertheless it has been unto them "line upon line," and "precept upon precept," "that they might go, and fall backward and be broken, and snared and taken." Isa. 28:13.

