

THE PRESENT CRISIS

"Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." – Matthew 24:6.

THE Scriptures speak of a great Time of Trouble in the conclusion of this Gospel Age. Our Lord in the prophecy recorded in Matthew 24 mentions this great Time of Trouble. Under a figure of the distress of earth and the shaking of the Heavens, etc., He tells of the momentous events of our day. In connection with it He says, "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads and rejoice; for your redemption draweth nigh" – linking this great climax to the deliverance of the Church, their change from earthly nature to Heavenly nature.

It is in this connection that our Lord says, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." These continued all through the Age. We are not to think of wars as being the particular thing that the Master had in mind when He referred to the great trouble with which this Age will close. That trouble is pictured in Daniel's prophecy as "a Time of Trouble such as was not since there was a nation." – Daniel 12:1.

Our Lord speaks of this same Time of Trouble and says that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24.) These "Times of the Gentiles" represent a period during which the world was to be ruled by Gentile nations. The Gentiles were to show their skill in giving the world a government. This giving of the world into the hand of Gentile governments followed the taking away of the typical kingdom from typical Israel. With Zedekiah's fall and the taking away of the crown from him, the Lord declared an overturning of

His government until the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom.
– Ezekiel 21:25.

Simultaneously, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, which portrayed the Gentile rule of earth during the interregnum of God's Kingdom. Daniel showed the king the dream, which the monarch had forgotten, and gave him the interpretation. The king had dreamed of a great image, the head of which represented the Babylonian kingdom; the breast of silver, the Medo-Persian kingdom; the belly and thighs of brass, the Grecian kingdom; the legs of iron, the Roman Empire. The "Holy" Roman Empire was represented in the feet, part of clay and part of iron. A stone was to smite the image upon the feet, which were iron and clay, and break them to pieces. This crushing of the feet of the image was to come in the end of the Age, and would be the preparatory step to the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom. – Daniel 2:31-45.

So long as these governments would be here, they and Messiah's Kingdom could not cooperate. The Gentile governments are based on selfishness and coercion; Christ's Kingdom will be based on justice, love, mercy, under the Prince of Peace. The two could not rule at the same time. Hence it was foretold that Messiah at His Second Coming will first bind the "strong man" of Gentile supremacy, and on the ruins of earthly dominions establish a righteous Government.

The present terrible war is not the great Time of Trouble in the fullest sense of the word, but merely its forerunner. The great Time of Trouble of the Scriptures will be brought on by anarchy – the general uprising of the people; as the Prophet says, "every man's hand against his neighbor, no peace to him that goeth out or to him that cometh in." – Zechariah 8:10.

FRUIT OF THE VINE OF THE EARTH

The Lord declares that He has a hand in these matters that are a natural outcome of human selfishness, aggressiveness and greed. The Lord has to do with all this, in that at the appropriate time He granted to the world the *knowledge* which is stirring them up. In other words, men with sin and selfishness in their hearts are not in a position to use *knowledge* wisely, rightly. Without reflecting upon any person or class we can see that if the knowledge that is in the world should continue to increase, a certain few, by that increase of knowledge, would get far ahead of the others – until finally the wealth would be massed in the hands of the very few, and the whole world would become the serfs of these few. The money in the hands of the wealthy increases rapidly. On the other hand the population doubles in a century. Who cannot see that under present conditions there would eventually be nothing but slavery for the masses, governed by an autocracy?

As long as governments are strong, their overthrow will be impossible. Our thought, often presented in these columns, is that a great war will weaken the nations, preparatory to the period of anarchy. Such a great war, crippling the world financially and discrediting the rulers in the eyes of their peoples, will open the way for the anarchy. The people of former times looked upon their rulers as demi-gods. This veneration for authority still obtains to some extent, especially in Russia, where the people almost worship the Czar – except those who are anarchists. The present war is the one we have expected. It will drain the world of blood and treasure. Then the nations, sick, weak, faint, will fall a prey to Socialism, which will become anarchy. Thus in accord with the Bible predictions earth will be prepared to welcome Messiah's **[R5526 : page 260]** Kingdom as "the desire of all peoples." – Hag. 2:7.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

"Wait ye upon Me, saith the Lord, until that Day when I rise up to the prey; for My determination is to gather the nations, that I may bring the nations together to pour upon them Mine indignation, even all My fierce anger; for the whole [social] earth shall be devoured by the fire of Mine anger. And then will I turn unto the people a *pure Message*." – Zephaniah 3:8,9.

What did Jehovah mean by "*wait ye*"? He meant that we are to wait for His time. He told us of the general leveling of the things of this world; He declared that all the kingdoms will be submerged in general anarchy. There will be a fervency of heat, discussion, tumult, strife, and at this time the nations of the world will "melt" – go down quickly. We believe this. We are not thinking of Christians as contending with the sword; for those who take the sword are to perish by it, our Lord said. God's people are to stand aloof, recognizing that "the powers that be are ordained of God," in that He permits them, while He has full power to make changes. If He permits them, it is not for us to seek to overthrow them.

This symbolic burning of the world is sometimes referred to by secular writers. In the newspapers we frequently read about "the great conflagration" – speaking of this fire of trouble, strife, confusion. The *elements* that will "melt with fervent heat" will be the labor element, the artisan element, the capitalistic element, the religious element, etc. The Lord has been gathering the nations, as He said He would in this "Day" – within the last forty years. This gathering means the drawing of the nations together. All the nations of Europe – and even China – are nearer to us today than Chicago was seventy years ago. The Nations are drawn closely together by the Atlantic and Pacific cables, so that China and Japan are within a few hours' communication with us, and a financial panic affects the whole world within twenty-four hours.

While the Lord has been doing this work, we are not to think that He is pitting these nations against each other. He has permitted them to work out their selfish propensities, and the result is strife. Knowledge is doing this – bringing on the restless social condition.

THE FINAL OUTLOOK

We see that this war has been brought on by very peculiar circumstances. Russia and Austria have each long been anxious to have an opening to the Mediterranean; but they have been fearful that a great war would result from any attempt to secure it. They have more or less "egged on" the smaller states – the Balkan States. They have done everything that they could to weaken each other's influence in these states – the "Buffer States," as they are called. Paid agents have been sent into that region by one nation to create antagonism against the other.

Austria thought that she had a good excuse for war against Servia on account of the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne by a Servian. She hoped that this excuse would seem to be sufficient. She hoped that Russia would say nothing; or that, otherwise, Germany's shaken fist would deter her. But this time it did not work. Russia determined to support the Servians, who are her kinsfolk; and this has brought in the other nations.

Apparently the great European kings and emperors realize that their own thrones are tottering, and also that this war may unify their people. The willingness of the people is an important factor in connection with any war. A war with another nation is preferable to the civil strife of a social upheaval. Their judgment is approved by facts. A Socialist in Paris the other day said something against the war, and he was assassinated immediately.

Our thought is that this war will so weaken all the nations, so impoverish them, as to make them ready for the anarchy which the Bible portrays. The disbanding of the troops and the returning of

them to their homes, disappointed, dissatisfied and angry with the kings, rulers, [R5527 : page 260] nobles, will result in the anarchy which will doubtless prevail throughout Europe – and extend to every nation, as the Bible predicts. We understand that Christ's Kingdom is associated with this in the sense that Christ is about to take to Himself His great power and reign. The Lord speaks of the anarchists as "His great army" in a figurative way, just as He speaks of the caterpillars, which are used figuratively to represent His army. The saints will not be in that army at all. The Lord has used even the Devil as His agent, and "the wrath of man to praise Him." Anarchists may be part of the Lord's great army in that He will supervise their campaign.

Eventually, the United States will become involved, and so fall with the other nations; not necessarily because the United States will engage in this war, however. To do so would be very foolish indeed. Our government is strong because the people govern themselves; they have their own government and their own liberties, and can change their own laws. We believe that they are doing this more and more, and are preparing to do so still further, so that finally our Government will come down to a socialistic basis. But before this shall happen, the wealthy, seeking to protect themselves, will doubtless bring things to pass in violation of the laws, and will thus precipitate trouble, believing that they are resisting injustice. Wise would it be for all to accept as gracefully as possible the inevitable leveling; but will they be wise?

It is human nature to make the streets run with blood rather than to suffer defeat and surrender "vested rights." The people are being led on by hatred, and an appeal to unreason. While certain truths are presented, the presentation is not truthful. But many are being inoculated, and are preparing, as they think, for Socialism – we would say, for anarchism, here as easily as in Europe.

ARMAGEDDON STILL FUTURE

While it is possible that Armageddon may begin next Spring, yet it is purely speculation to attempt to say just when. We see, however, that there are parallels between the close of the Jewish Age and this Gospel Age. These parallels seem to point to the year just before us – particularly the early months.

The Scriptures indicate that the Gentile governments will receive from their own peoples their first notice that their lease of power has expired. The people will take note of the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens. The judgments of the Lord will begin to be manifest in the world, and will run counter to many of their interests. This manifestation of His presence is Scripturally called the Epiphania, the shining forth, the revealment, of the King of Glory. "He shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.) As a result, the nations of earth will be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel. – Psalm 2:8,9.

The prophetic forecast tells us that the trouble will begin in the ecclesiastical heavens, and later will proceed to the social element. The picture given of the end of Gentile Times is that of a stone striking the image of Gentile supremacy in its feet. (Daniel 2:34,35.) The impact will be so sharp and so thorough as to leave nothing of them. Having had their day, they will cease to be – "become like the chaff of the summer threshing floor." The next event in order will be the Messianic Kingdom, of which it is written, "The desire of all peoples shall come."

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