

"THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS"

**"Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness."
– 2 Peter 3:11.**

MANY in the past have misunderstood St. Peter's prophecy concerning the destruction of the present heavens and earth. They have inferred that he meant the burning up of the literal earth and heavens in a great conflagration. This thought seems to be embodied in all the creeds, Protestant and Catholic. Apparently there has been a serious mistake here. The Apostle is using these words in a figurative sense, just as we might say that a man would move heaven and earth to accomplish his designs. Throughout the prophecies of the Bible the heavens mean the ecclesiastical powers and the earth means organized society, including the financial and the political powers.

The things of the Present Order are soon to pass away – its banking institutions, its monetary affairs, its stocks and bonds, its politics, its great religious systems, indeed, the entire social fabric. The whole arrangement is now about to be melted down. An entirely New Order is about to come in. This melting down will begin in the overthrow of the religious institutions. To the whole world it will be an unexpected and overwhelming catastrophe; but to the true Church, watching as the Lord bade them to do, it will not be a surprise; for these are "children of the light," and this Day of the Lord shall not overtake them as a thief.

The Lord's faithful, watching people, guided by the Word of Truth, will have an understanding of temporal affairs. As St. Paul has assured us, though this Day shall come as a thief and a snare upon the whole world, it shall not so come upon God's children who are living up to their privileges. "When these things begin to

come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your deliverance draweth nigh"; "When ye see these things, ...know that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." (Luke 21:28,31.) The Master does not say, When ye see *all* these things, but When ye see the *beginning* of them, then we are to lift up our heads and rejoice – not rejoicing in the trouble, nor in the sufferings of others, but in the fact that these things are the foretold signs that the Present Order is about to be succeeded by a New Order, which will be far better, and more advantageous and desirable for all.

The Church herself will be the "new heavens," and will come into great glory, power and privilege. The thought in the early Church, evidently, was that these dispensational changes would very shortly come to pass. They were living in constant expectation of the coming of the Lord, the establishment of His Kingdom and the glorification of the Church. Some of them even felt too confident of the matter. The Apostle Paul writes to the Church of Thessalonica saying that some of them had made a mistake in thinking that the Day of the Lord might have already come. He tells them that that Day could not come until the Man of Sin should be revealed. Thus in the days of the Apostles the Church was ever on the qui vive; and throughout this entire Age the Lord's people have been left in uncertainty as to the time of the Master's Second Coming, watching, preparing, for the things of the Kingdom, knowing that the Day of Christ would come as a "thief in the night" at the appointed time. – 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

WHAT THE WATCHERS NOW SEE

Now we who are living in this Day see the beginning of these foretold events. We see the prelude to the great Battle of Armageddon. Our thought is that the Armageddon itself will be the mighty "Earthquake" spoken of in Revelation. (Revelation 16:16-18.) In this great revolution and in the succeeding anarchy all earthly institutions will be swept away. The result of the anger,

hatred and strife, if permitted to continue indefinitely, would be so terrible that it would bring about the destruction of the race; but for the Elect's sake, that they may begin their glorious reign, God will cut short the carnage, and will set up His own Kingdom under Christ and His elect Church. Christ and His Bride will take over the kingdoms of this world, and thus will hinder the strife of men from going to the extreme that it would otherwise go. But it will not be stopped until the Present Order shall have been wholly dissolved.

A vivid description of this awful Time of Trouble is given by the Prophets. For the benefit of our new readers, we give a few citations of such prophecies, which repay investigation. (Isaiah 24:17-22; 28:21,22; 33:7-14; 34:1-8; Psalm 18:7-19.) See STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Vol. 4, pp. 15-20. Along this same line, read also Isaiah 13:1-13; Jeremiah 25:8-38; Revelation 18; 16:12-21. We believe that the present strife in Europe is very forcefully depicted in some of the prophecies cited above, and that this is only the beginning of the great trouble and overthrow, the breaking in pieces of the [R5735 : page 228] nations as a potter's vessel. In our own land we see the portents of the coming trouble, in strikes, labor riots, I.W.W. demonstrations, etc. The Scriptures cited above declare in unmistakable language that the whole Present Order will go up in a mighty conflagration. The troubles not long since in the Colorado mines, the more recent strikes in London, Chicago, Bridgeport and Bayonne, are only premonitory rumblings which, with many other disturbances of like nature, presage the coming storm.

Selfishness is the great motive power of the world – if this thing is done or that thing is accomplished, something very advantageous to themselves will result. Because people want their own names to be great, they strain every nerve to accomplish that result. They do this also in political lines – trying to "feather their nests" for the future. In Europe they do the same along monarchical

lines. Various Houses in power seek to have and to hold the honor of the people. The whole world are setting their hearts and minds on the things which will bring no real satisfaction in the end, and not upon the things of the Lord.

The Apostle points out that all these things that occupy men's minds and absorb their energies are to pass away. None of them are to be permanent. We realize this to be so. We see that their passing away is just at hand in this our day. Others do not perceive it, although many thoughtful minds see that present conditions are unprecedented, that some great change must be impending; and their hearts are failing them for fear.

Surely the knowledge of these things, of the transitoriness, the trifling value of the most alluring of earth's gifts, should cause us to turn from them and to set our affections and hopes upon the Heavenly things, which are infinite in value and which shall never pass away. We should lay up treasure in Heaven, where the institutions will be permanent, and where armies and revolutions will not destroy the Government. All those who believe in the great changes just before us should be living for the future and not for the present. The more we discern, then, the teachings of the Bible, the more we imbibe its spirit, the more shall we live for and prepare for the great blessings promised for the future to those who love God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is the injunction of our Father in Heaven.

HOLY ATMOSPHERE, NOT MIASMA, FOR NEW CREATURES

These directions are not to the world, and they are not to the flesh of the children of God, but are for us as New Creatures in Christ. The old creature being imperfect has no standing with God; but there is nothing unholy in the New Creature, and the imperfections of his flesh being covered by the Robe of Christ's righteousness he has a standing with God. The difficulty which the

New Creature encounters is the weakness of the flesh in which he must tabernacle for the present, and the danger of being misled, enticed away, from the things that are holy. Day by day he seeks to control the flesh and to bring it wholly into subjection.

The New Creature begotten from above, wishes to be holy and to keep his tabernacle holy. He breathes by nature a holy atmosphere; anything contrary is poisonous to this Heavenly germ which must be fostered and nourished with the greatest care. That it may properly develop it is necessary that it be fed upon "the finest of the wheat"; it is necessary, too, that the very thoughts of **[R5736 : page 228]** the brain and the meditations of the heart should be conformed as nearly as possible to God's perfect standard for these New Creatures. To this end rich supply is furnished by the Heavenly Father, who begat us to this new nature.

The child of God who is slovenly or careless in the management of his earthly body is not living in accord with true holiness, is not properly developing this Heavenly "seed" begotten within him. These New Creatures, so far as possible, should fellowship with one another. They are to seek to build one another up in the most holy faith. They are to remember that they are not to pull each other down, but are to endeavor to assist each other as far as they may be able. Whoever thinks to himself, "Sometime the Kingdom is coming, sometime the Time of Trouble will overtake the present order of things; but meantime we will enjoy the things of this world," will not be living up to his privileges, and will be very likely to be taken unawares as by "a thief in the night"; for he is not living in proper relationship with the Lord, and he will be likely to find when too late that he has lost the "prize."

"Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness"!

"My Father! my Father! this heart would be Thine!"

Oh, keep it from wanderings!
Oh, visit and nourish Thy wilderness vine,
Though it be from the bitter springs!
Till the time of my trial and pruning is o'er,
And Thy child is safe on eternity's shore!"

