

"THE EARTH TREMBLED" – AND FELL

"His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled." – Psalm 97:4.

GOD'S holy Prophets of the Old Testament and of the New give us numerous pictures of our day and the events now taking place in the world. The Psalmist David, taking prophetically a standpoint of observation future from his day declared, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof!" (Psalm 97:1.) As we have shown in SCRIPTURE STUDIES, Vol. III., Study 9, this began to be true when our Lord Jesus, having returned to earth to set up His Kingdom, took unto Himself His great power. Yet not until His Kingdom has been fully established in the earth will His glorious Reign be clearly recognized.

That the Prophet David is referring especially to the present time, from 1878 down to the full inauguration of the Kingdom, is clear from his succeeding statement: "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne. A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about." How true it is that the storm clouds are all about us in this Day of the Kingly presence of Jehovah's great Representative, the Executor of His great Purposes! Daily the darkness of gloom and perplexity deepens on every side for those not acquainted with Jehovah's purposes.

"A FIRE GOETH BEFORE HIM"

If we inquire, Why is this Day of His presence such a Time of Trouble and distress of nations? the answer comes, Because righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne, and He is judging the nations and weighing them in the balance. Judgment is being laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet (Isaiah

28:17), to the intent that ere long the equitable principles of His Government may be established in all the earth. Not only will all unrighteousness be made manifest, but "a fire goeth before Him and burneth up His enemies." (Psalm 97:3.) All the wilful and persistent opposers of His righteous course shall be "cut off," "destroyed," "burned up," "*devoured* with the fire of His jealousy." – Zeph. 3:8.

This work of judgment and the consequent Time of Trouble being a necessary preparation for the glorious Reign of Righteousness that shall immediately succeed it, and all being wisely directed by the High and Holy One, who is "too wise to err, too good to be unkind," the Prophet bids us discern in it an abundant cause for rejoicing and gladness. (See Psalm 96:9-13; 98:1-9.) Indeed, there is great cause for rejoicing, not only among the saints, but in the whole earth; and it is the privilege of the saints to tell the glad tidings to all who will hear.

But whether men hear or whether they forbear, let us tell it out, and by and by when the great afflictions of this Judgment hour begin to seal the instruction upon the hearts of men, then the blessed testimony will be as healing balm. They will see that He who smote them in His wrath, and scourged them in His hot displeasure, is also merciful and gracious, and unwilling that they should perish, but desirous rather that they should turn unto Him, obey His counsels and live.

LIGHTNING FLASHES FROM THE THRONE

It is in the midst of the clouds and darkness of this Day of Trouble incident to the setting up of Messiah's Kingdom that the statement of the Prophet is verified: "His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled." How apt is this figure! Truly like lightning flashes in the midst of the gloom and perplexity of this cloudy day, come to men the remarkable glimpses of the great principles of Truth and Righteousness in contrast with which the world's present disorder is so manifest! A flash of lightning from the

obscured Throne discloses here one error, and there another, and another.

Soon the whole world will be aroused. Already it is largely so. Every day adds to the intensity of the trouble, and the whole world trembles for fear, not knowing what the outcome will be, but dreading the worst. The editorials of some of our great newspapers read as if written from the standpoint of Present Truth, so remarkably do they foretell what they declare to be almost certain to follow this present terrible war. Revolution and black anarchy are freely prophesied, to precede a great reconstruction period. The great French Revolution is referred to in contrast, as an April shower compared to a destructive hurricane of the tropics. How truly are the Master's words concerning this time being fulfilled – "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for apprehension of the things coming on the earth"! – Luke 21:26.

It is remarkable that these lightning flashes are continually calling attention to the Word of God, to the Golden Rule, to the equal rights and privileges of human brotherhood, to the faultless character and loving and self-sacrificing disposition of Jesus Christ, to the Law of Love in contrast with the law of selfishness everywhere prevailing. It seems remarkable, too, how often in these days of war and stress *worldly* men are drawing attention to the prophecies of the Scriptures, and wondering whether present conditions, and the troubles which all intelligent people see just ahead, are not fulfilments of these Bible prophecies. All this is leading men to reason of righteousness and of coming judgments (Acts 24:25), when they hope and believe that in some way present [R5989 : page 340] wrongs will be righted and righteousness established.

By the sudden, and now increasingly frequent, flashes of light which issue from the storm clouds that surround the invisible, spiritual presence of our glorious King, these principles of the Word of God are being illuminated and brought to the front for the

consideration of all men. They are discussed not only in the daily press, but in our popular periodicals, in the official labor organs, in stores and factories, in counting-rooms, in the market-places, at public gatherings. Even heathen nations are discussing them, and are contrasting both the daily lives of professed Christians and the present course of the professed Christian nations with the character and the teachings of the great Founder of the Christian religion, extolling the latter and ridiculing the former.

"THE EARTH SAW – AND TREMBLED"

As a result of God's lightning flashes which are enlightening the world, there is great commotion everywhere manifest. Never before have such conditions prevailed. There are ominous mutterings of dissatisfaction, unrest; and the whole current of popular thought throughout the earth is set in a revolutionary direction. The lightning flashes are revealing the corruption in the world, the dishonesty in high places, and showing men that they are living far below the dignity of manhood. But how to right things they are not able to see; and the conflicting ideas, voices, theories and threats, reveal the facts which the Prophets foretold; for "the nations are angry," "the heathen [Gentiles, peoples] rage," and the whole earth trembles from the din of a wordy conflict and from the blows which even now are beginning to arouse the world.

"ZION HEARD – AND WAS GLAD"

But in the midst of all this trouble and tumult in the world, what is the attitude of the Lord's truly consecrated and faithful people? Are they, too, in fear? As the judgments of the Lord fall heavily upon the wayward and disobedient so that the whole earth reels and staggers as a drunken man (Psalms 107:27), are the saints in dismay and distress? Ah, no; for it is written, "Zion heard, and was glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of Thy judgments, O Lord!" It is the "sinners in Zion" that are "afraid." Psalm 91 and 46 show why the saints rejoice and are restful of heart while others weep and

lament. It is because they "dwell in the secret place of the Most High [represented by the Holy of the typical Tabernacle], and abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (as the typical Tabernacle was covered by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night). It is because God is their "Refuge and Strength." "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him, and He will show them His Covenant." – Psalm 25:14.

These dwellers in the secret place of the Most High are provided in these perilous times with a clear knowledge of the Divine Plan, with its times and seasons, which enables them to see both the necessity for the present method of Divine discipline upon the world and also the peaceable fruits of righteousness which shall result therefrom. In the midst of the storm and battle of this great Day of the Lord, they hear the commanding voice of the Lord of armies, and their hearts rejoice; for they have full confidence in His ability to bring order out of all the confusion. They realize that in the judgments of this Day it is the Lord that speaks from Heaven – from the high place of authority and control; therefore they give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness (Psalm 30:4) – of His Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power, which insure His doing all things well.

THE HEEDLESS WHO WILL NOT HEAR

But the Psalmist intimated that, while the world at large would be in ignorance of the real portent of present events, and therefore in fear and dread, and while the saints, with clear knowledge, will be rejoicing and lifting up their heads, because they see the outcome, some – heedless both of the world's distress and of the Voice which speaketh from Heaven – will still boast themselves of their idols. He says, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols." These words call to mind the warning of the Apostle Paul: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh from Heaven." (Hebrews 12:25.) St. Paul addresses these words to those who know the Lord's voice and recognize it, warning them against at

any time refusing longer to heed it, when He speaks in wrath and judgment.

But alas! there are some who heed not the warning, and who, although they recognize the voice of the Lord, [R5990 : page 340] refuse longer to obey it. They turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven, toward the idols which their wayward hearts have set up instead of God. These "graven images" are indeed the work of their own hands – the human philosophies, and science – "falsely so called" – of this evil day. And those who reject the testimony of God, when once they have heard it, invariably fall into some *one* of the many forms of idolatrous worship now so prevalent; or else they drift restlessly from one to another of them.

All such shall surely be confounded; they shall be put to shame and confusion; their idols shall be destroyed. The wilful sinner, once enlightened and blessed with the hallowed influences of the Holy Spirit and the Truth, shall not, the Apostle declared, escape the just punishment for his deeds. Heb. 12:14-19 points out this danger to the children of God, and warns them of the fearful penalties of turning away from the holy commandment delivered unto them. The Apostle Paul here depicts the scenes accompanying the inauguration of the old Law Covenant, and shows it to be a picture of events which will accompany the establishment of the New Law Covenant, at the close of this present Age, under the greater than Moses – our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Mountain (Kingdom) of the Lord's House is now being established in the top of the mountains, superseding the great kingdoms of this world, and is being exalted above the hills – the smaller governments. (Isaiah 2:2.) Clouds and darkness, trouble and perplexity and distress of nations are round about; and the thunderings and lightnings are making all the earth to tremble as did Israel at Mt. Sinai. (Exodus 19:1-25.) And now – since the Spring of 1878 – God has "set His King upon His Holy Hill of Zion." (Psalm

2:6.) Therefore, if those who refused to obey Moses, and presumptuously disgraced the ceremonies of the occasion at Sinai, met with instant death, how can we escape if we disregard the voice of the great Mediator of the New Covenant, and the remarkable circumstances which now accompany its establishment?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

We see the deepening clouds of trouble. We hear the thunder tones of judgment that "call the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof" (Psalm 50:1) – from the east to the west. We see the lightning flashes of Truth and Righteousness, and observe how the whole earth is now in the shaking process which will eventuate in the complete overthrow of all existing institutions, systems and governments. Present events indeed speak in trumpet tones. How shall we regard these things? Surely, dear brethren, it will be with thoughtful **[R5990 : page 341]** and reverent hearts! Surely we shall watch and pray, lest "a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it!" (Hebrews 4:1.) We shall guide our course with the greatest carefulness that we may make our calling and election sure.

In this eventful period everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that only the unshakable things of truth and righteousness may remain. (Hebrews 12:25-29.) Every one called to share in the coming Kingdom must be a lover of righteousness, one who will courageously and lovingly stand for the Truth however much it may be spoken against. All others will be shaken out of this company. The snares and delusions of this "evil day" are accomplishing this very work. In the end only the true will remain. "Seeing that we look for these things [let us] be diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14), ready for the entrance into that rest which yet remains.

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