

PROPHETIC TRUTHS FOR TODAY

Unveiling the End-Time Events

by

John E. Dahlin

Copyright © 1961

CHAPTER TEN

WHEN FAITH IS SCARCE ON EARTH

“Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:7, 8)

SOME YEARS ago I listened to a very young preacher who spoke effectively on the subject “Faith to Spare.” I thought, “Brother, where will you find the text to sustain what your topic calls for?” He did.

First, he took the New Testament account of the centurion who came to Jesus beseeching the Lord to help his sick servant. Jesus said, **“I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am unworthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant will be healed. When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel”** (Matthew 8:7-8,10). Here was an example of a man who had faith to spare.

The next example used by the speaker was the story of the Syrophenician woman who came to Jesus in behalf of her afflicted daughter. First the Lord rebuffed her, for as a Gentile she addressed Jesus on Jewish ground, saying, **“Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David”** (Matthew 16:22). But when she was willing to take the crumbs that fell from the Master’s table, Jesus said, **“O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour”** (v. 28). This was a good exemplification of a person who had faith even to spare.

The text from which I have selected the caption for this message, however, presents the exact opposite to the illustrations just given. It reveals a time when genuine, persevering faith will be a scarce spiritual commodity on earth. **“When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?”**

Throughout the Gospel narratives, we find that Jesus used the question and answer method to drive home spiritual truth. Our Lord was the incomparable teacher, and a vast field of truth is opened by this one question.

First of all, our Lord makes it plain that prior to His return there will be a scarcity of faith on this earth.

In other words, there will be a tapering off in this precious element as we approach the end of the age. **“When the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?”** In a strict dispensational recognition of the text, *it may refer more specifically to His coming in glory*, and not the rapture of the Church. But it is only obvious that the same spiritual tendency will be characteristic on earth throughout the entire brief period which brings the whole age to its close.

The text suggests that at our Lord’s return other characteristics will become unusually prominent: Our Lord will doubtlessly find, at His return, a great expansion in forms of godliness but a denial of the power thereof (II Timothy 3:5). Indeed, there will be a superabundance of externalism, as e.g., systems of religion, rituals, and ceremonies. Religious movements will become more numerous and prominent the closer we move towards the end of the dispensation. For several decades we have seen also a stepped-up tempo of works which may be classified as humanitarianism. In fact, the Federal Council of Churches which emerged in 1908 officially embraced the social gospel. The present World Council with all its humanitarianism and religious activity manifests an even greater degree of this type of emphasis.

I think the text suggests also that the Lord will find a more highly developed priesthood and ministerial leadership and prominence than in any other age. When has the clergy put such emphasis on training as now? It is not our purpose to discredit education and training for the church, but the supreme danger is that men are prone to put a chief reliance upon it. Yes, our Lord will find at His return polished preachers who are careful so as not to offend anyone. Musical organizations capable of rendition of the most excellent productions and concerts will flourish, the emphasis being placed on quality and artistic richness. Cultural and artistic gifts are being given prominence in our age. All of this may be classified as the form of godliness, since the emphasis is given to the external and not to the true spiritual element.

In the text our Lord is not depicted as being anxious concerning the external attainments in Churchianity, but rather in regard to the quality of the inner life of the church and the individual believer. The Church of Laodicea, which typifies the last period of the church age, had a great abundance of external activities. In other words, it was a smoothly organized church. It considered itself in need of nothing. But our Lord said, **“Thou art wretched, and miserable and poor, and blind, and naked . . . I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire . . . and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”** Our Lord had been crowded out, due to the many activities and programs of the church.

FAITH IN DIVINE POWER WILL BE SCARCE

The God of the Bible is revealed as one of power. We might well exclaim, **“Where is the God of Elijah?”** Truly Elijah’s God was a person who had unlimited power. Doubt in God’s power seems to be on a definite decline. If the prayer meeting is the hour of power, why do not more than a small segment of the church people attend this hour of prayer? If the prayer and the anointing of the sick with oil is valid for our time, why do so few follow the method set forth in the Epistle of James? When the blind man cried out to Jesus for help, the Lord responded by saying, **“Believe ye that I am able to do this?”** And He also said with great encouragement, **“All things are possible unto him that believeth.”**

When Peter, who started to walk on the water, was overtaken by doubt in the power of Jesus' word, he began to sink. Most people seem to think prayer is conquering God's reluctance, when actually they ought to realize, it is taking hold of God's willingness. Christendom today manifests itself much as the people did who stood around the grave of Lazarus doubting the power of our Lord. The Saviour was grieved to see the depth of this doubt in the divine power even among His closest friends.

At the close of the age, and at the time of our Lord's return, there will be a scarcity of belief in God's power.

We see already how the premium is given to great gifts, and to smoothly organized programs. Great personalities are brought in to spearhead these many projects. Human power, cleverness, and promotional wonders often displace a reliance on divine power. All this we find despite the unalterable fact of Scripture that faith is the basic element. It is still true that **"Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."**

There is a desperate need for reliance upon God's power, yet there is an astonishing scarcity now of faith in that divine power. More and more self-reliance and human resourcefulness in religion are characteristic of the age as it draws to its close.

FAITH IN THE DIVINE GOODNESS SCARCE

It may be easier to believe in the power of God than in His divine goodness and love. This particular kind of faith is being stretched these days almost to a breaking point. Again and again we hear people say, "Is it not strange that God does not care!" And entirely too often people say, "God seems to have receded from the position of direct concern for the world in which we live." Superficially considered, it may well appear that God is keeping His hands off the current world situation although such is not the case. Repeatedly people in our day exclaim, "If God loves His world, why doesn't He intervene and stop these forces which are about to destroy all of civilization?" Yes, faith in the love of God and in His goodness is becoming increasingly scarce on earth. Unquestionably in Europe this kind of faith is burning even more dimly than it does over here in America.

We need faith like that of the penitent thief dying on the cross. Our Saviour, who was on the center cross, did not look like a king; outwardly He appeared as a malefactor. And yet when the crowd scorned Him, the penitent thief prayed to our dying Saviour, **"Lord, remember me."** The penitent one saw beyond the dark circumstances surrounding Calvary. He knew our Lord had a kingdom in which He would have power. Moreover, the penitent thief knew Christ had power to extend favors in the coming world, and if he a sinner could get the assurance that Christ would remember him, it would be easier to die. Clearly and unmistakably the dying thief had a quality of faith which was otherwise absent in the vicinity of the cross. It was no wonder that Jesus said to the penitent one who had faith to believe in the love and goodness of God, **"This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."**

Increasingly we detect that men's faith in the unchangeable Christ is being dimmed through the satanic pressures of our time. Comparatively speaking, there are relatively few who maintain an undiminished faith in the Rightness and goodness of the Lord. Christ was able to look down the corridor of time and see the climactic period at the end, when faith would be an exceedingly scarce commodity on earth.

FAITH IN THE DIVINE METHOD SCARCE

Again, there will be an increasing scarcity of faith in the divine methods as we reach the end of the age. God's program in this dispensation is laid down in Acts 15:14-16, **"To visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name . . . After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down . . ."**

The marching order of the Church is to bring the message of the Gospel to all nations. Jesus said, **"Ye shall be my witnesses."** There are those in our present generation who seem to feel they have hit upon a better method, which is to federate, or bring together scores of denominations in a world church, the purpose of which is to promote humanitarianism, brotherhood, improvement in the social, economic and religious areas of life—in other words, bringing in a better world through the social gospel approach.

That the World Council of Churches has substituted for the New Testament program its own program, was clearly manifest when it voted down decisively at the Evanston conclave its belief both in the personal return of our Lord, and in God's special dispensational program for His own nation Israel. The hope of the World Council is not in Christ's return, but in humanitarianism, in religion, and in the social program of the church.

If our Lord came today, He would find that by and large throughout Christendom, the original method has been superseded by one that seems more expedient. Faith in the New Testament method is rapidly vanishing in the present-day church. Instead of emphasizing the new birth, the modern church is insisting on rearing people into Christianity. Of the early church, however, it is said, **"God added to the church daily those that were saved."** The divine method is blessedly simple, but Christendom is insisting on its own program; faith in the divine method is tapering off now with alarming rapidity.

The climactic thought in the text is reached in the words, **"Shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him?"**

Our Lord was concerned that there be those who never cease to cry day and night unto Him. Our Lord is primarily concerned that we will be awake and that our lamps be burning in the midnight hour. Paul also writes, **"It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand . . ."**

Jesus is anxious, and we might say even worried, lest we fall in line with the spirit of the age and be found among those who say, **"Where is the promise of his coming?"** The spiritual sleep about which both Christ and Paul speak is characteristic of modern Churchianity.

Truly millions are satisfied with the mere forms of godliness. Yes, every year religious leaders boast about a new high in national church membership. And almost every respectable person wants to masquerade in the cloak of religion and external piety. Christ is concerned with life. He wants to find those who cry day and night unto Him; those who never let go but who plead and pray and look for His return from heaven. The personal experience is what counts in Christianity. It is often obscured by all this chatter about religious piety and externalism. We need to get back to the fundamentals and emphasize the personal element in Christianity.

A preacher of the old school was out on his visitation evangelism. One day he stopped his buggy in front of a cottage and, walking to the door, and knocked. A woman, plainly clad, opened to him. He said, "Does Jesus live here?" Her face flushed and she did not answer. Again, he asked the same question, and getting no response he turned away to call at the next door. But the woman went immediately into the backyard where her husband was chopping wood, and said to him, "A strange man came to our door a few moments ago and asked if Jesus lived here."

Her husband's attention was aroused, and he said, "Of course you told him that we belong to the church down the road, that we attend regularly, that we are religious, and that we contribute generously to the church?"

"Oh, no," she said, "He didn't ask me that; he simply asked, "Does Jesus live here?"

The supreme question we need to face is, "Does Jesus live in our hearts?"

Religion, externalism—that is, forms and ceremonies—does not produce spiritual life. Neither can such be substitutes for the shining hope of the Church, which is our Lord's return. All around us we witness an increasing scarcity of real scriptural faith. This is significant, I think, in the light of the fact that every New Testament writer points to the oncoming apostasy. Paul refers to it as "**a falling away**" prior to our Lord's return. Pure, unadulterated faith is rare, and it will become increasingly scarce the nearer we come to the end of the age.

Fortunately God's true children will still possess true faith to the end, but they will be in the minority. The author of Hebrews, while depicting a turning away from Christ, says, "**We are persuaded better things of you**" (Hebrews 6:9).

Born-again believers are "**the children of light**" no matter how wide the apostasy will become. Real spiritual discernment is exceptionally scarce in all religious circles. There is hardly any other commodity so scarce in the realm of Churchianity.

"**When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?**"

~ end of chapter 10 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
