

PROPHETIC TRUTHS FOR TODAY

Unveiling the End-Time Events

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE DEATH PANGS OF THE AGE

(Matthew 24:6-8; Mark 13:7, 8)

IN CONJUNCTION with truths pertaining to the End-Times, our Lord used solemnly the expression, “**The beginning of sorrows.**” In the Greek the word “*odin*” means *a pain, or, more specifically, a pang*, as e.g., that of a woman in travail, which increases in intensity until the delivery is accomplished.

Prophetically speaking, it is clear, I think, that just before the final drama of latter-day events is introduced, there will be the death pangs, or as the Scripture says, “**the beginning of sorrows.**” And obviously after the beginning has occurred, there will be the intensification of the sufferings of mankind, until it is all accomplished and the age completed.

Let us ascertain, if we can, whether such intensifications have already begun; in other words if the developments in our time may have brought about the prelude to the final cataclysm. The unprecedented developments and events of recent years indicate, I believe, that we may have witnessed the beginning of the end.

THE UNIVERSAL REALITY OF WAR

First in the series of events which are worldwide in scope is the ugly and awful scourge of war.

There has been an intensification of it ever since 1914. World War I was a terrible conflict. Over 10 million soldiers died, and 30 million who escaped death were wounded. Furthermore, over 10 million civilians perished. In the wake of that conflict there were many millions of widows and almost as many orphans. This was the most involved struggle which had taken place on this planet up to that time.

Twenty years later, World War II broke out. It became even more violent and titanic in that it involved still greater areas of the earth, and due to more dreadful weapons designed, the devastation was much greater. No face of the globe remained untouched. The loss of civilians was three times greater in the second world war. Six million Jews died in Nazi gas chambers, and millions upon millions in other nations died of malnutrition or in slave labor camps.

Since the end of World War II, which is relatively a short period, the armaments race has gone on without any sign of abatement. The major nations are girding themselves for another catastrophe far more horrible than the last world conflict. Weapons and bombs are designed to obliterate whole metropolitan areas within a few seconds.

The Book of Revelation indicates that in the final battle of the nations, one-third of the world's population will be decimated. In past generations it was somewhat difficult to conceive that such a loss of life on earth could be taken literally. With the present potential power of destruction through wicked men's ingenuity, there is no problem now in accepting the figures as set forth in the Book of Revelation. We see clearly that war will be intensified more and more until the final unparalleled conflict comes. With regard to war we are witnessing the prelude to the final catastrophe.

PESTILENCE AND FAMINE

This prophetic announcement is understandable in a very special way in our time because of the vastness of the earth's population. Following in the wake of World War I, throughout Eastern Europe and the Ukraine in particular, over 10 million people starved to death. Dr. Fritiof Nansen, who was in charge of relief work in Europe after World War I, called the starvation the most appalling in history and designated it as apocalyptic in character. Closely allied with the starvation was wide-spread pestilence. The flu epidemic alone ushered over 12 million into eternity in a few weeks. At Camp Grant, near Rockford, Ill., over 1,000 soldiers died of this epidemic. The Camp Commander, overwhelmed by the immensity of the scourge, committed suicide.

During World War I the scorched-earth policy, which was followed by armies on both sides, brought starvation and death to over 20 million, and undernourishment affected over 200,000,000 human beings who existed as living skeletons. Herbert Hoover, who surveyed the world situation immediately after the war, called the situation the most heart breaking in all of human history. These terrible spectacles of starvation and pestilences have happened in our scientific age.

As we move nearer to the culmination of Gentile rule, we find the Scriptures declaring that the twin monsters of human suffering will reach dimensions unheard of in any previous age.

THE POPULATION EXPLOSION

Experts predict and rightly so, I believe, that we will witness an unprecedented population increase in many areas of the earth. This is called "population explosion" for want of a more direct expression. The world's population is increasing at the rate of four million each month. In areas where there is the greatest density of population, we find the least capability of meeting the needs of the multitudes of people. In China, India, and other areas of Asia and Africa, the present reserve supply of food is below the safety level even in normal years. In other words, the margin is thin between the minimum of food requirement and starvation.

With transportation systems totally inadequate in most of those areas, one may easily understand the predicament facing tens of millions of people.

The final war, when it comes, will overshadow everything experienced by the human race in the way of starvation and pestilences. And, with the possibility of germ or biological warfare, it can easily be understood what will happen to mankind. Pestilences and starvation, these twins of human misery, will exceed even our greatest imagination with reference to the magnitude of the scorched-earth policy of the End-Times. With the contamination of the atmosphere by a fearful atomic fall-out which may be expected, it is no wonder the Bible speaks of the period as “**The Great Tribulation.**”

EARTHQUAKES WILL BE INTENSIFIED

As the end approaches earthquakes will increase and spread into ever wider areas of the globe.

The physical phenomena which we designate as earthquakes have been experienced all through the millenniums of human existence. But it is worthy of recognition that their occurrences have been rapidly increasing during the past 600 years.

The following is an abridged record made available by those who have made a special study of earth science.

- In the 14th century 147 earthquakes were recorded;
- In the 15th, 174;
- In the 16th, 253;
- In the 17th, 358,
- In the 18th, 640.

Notice as we come closer to contemporary periods that the intensification is very distinct, as there were 640 earthquakes in the 18th century, and 2,119 in the 19th. In this century all records are broken, and we have not yet entered the last one-third of the 20th.

The Book of Revelation indicates that this phenomenon will be intensified greatly as we move to the end of the age. A few years ago whole cities, both in Morocco and Iran, were destroyed burying thousands of people in the rubble. Later in Chile the greatest earthquake ever experienced on that continent (in areas involved) brought poverty and ruin to that land. In recent years earthquakes of great magnitude have come to Yugoslavia, Alaska and Turkey. It is not by blind chance that we are witnessing the sudden intensification of earthquakes. It is in line with Biblical predictions. No longer are earthquakes local, or regional; they occur in many different places.

The Book of Revelation depicts the world-wide scope of the End-Time events and physical phenomena. Such language as “**the kings of the earth**” and also “**every tribe and every tongue**” and similar expressions are used. The catastrophic events on this sphere will be worldwide in scope.

About two decades ago Wendell Willkie wrote a book entitled, “*One World.*” For quite some time it became the bestseller. He was the first leading statesman who endeavored to focus people’s attention on the fact that we no longer are isolated by oceans and continents. In other words, every conflict, political and ideological, tends to be global. He popularized the one-world concept. Isolationists were vigorously opposed to Willkie at the time. But today, in our century, isolationism is practically dead. Americans know that events, whether they are military, economic or political, tend to be global in scope.

We no longer talk with an exclusiveness in mind, that is, when we refer to the Eastern and the Western hemispheres. Not until the present generation has the one-world concept emerged almost universally. These matters are significant, I think, as they are linked with Bible prophecy. The Book of Revelation has the global portrayal of the final events and physical phenomena. We see now a preliminary verification of this.

The clearest present-day illustration which indicates we are nearing the end is the political ideology we designate as Communism. It has now threatened all of mankind. The free world and the forces of tyranny are in a death grapple in every section of the globe. The struggle has reached the North American continent. Cuba, lying about 90 miles from our mainland, has been taken over by Communism. Some Latin American republics are losing ground in this ideological struggle, and communistic influences can be expected to make even deeper inroads there. Daniel, who interpreted the prophetic significance of the great image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, pointed out the nature of the final conflict and struggle. It will involve the two systems, the iron and the clay, which represent the two final forms of government, dictatorship and the rule by the people.

During the entire period following World War II there has been an absolute impossibility of reaching an agreement between the free nations and the totalitarian system. Their political ideologies are incompatible with ours. While hundreds of meetings between the representatives of the two systems have been held, yet no agreement has been reached on arms limitation or the control of nuclear weapons. This total inability to reach an agreement will eventually lead to the last world conflict.

It is said of Antichrist that he will “**take away the peace of the earth.**”

We are rapidly moving toward that fearful day when that prophetic statement will be fully experienced on this earth. Dictatorship and freedom are clashing in almost every area of the earth. War has become an ugly reality that will involve the nations of the earth. We also read that people will “cry to the mountains and the rocks to fall over them.” The fear of nuclear war, and of fallout from such bombs, has created universal terror. When the reality comes, “**men’s hearts will fail them for fear**” as our Lord states it so graphically in the Olivet discourse.

Whoever thought 25 years ago that the major question facing mankind in the decade of the 60’s would be that of survival! It has become the international problem affecting every person on earth in the days in which we live.

THE CHURCH WILL ESCAPE

Fortunately the Church will witness not more than the prelude to the catastrophic events which will shake the whole earth. Jesus promised the believers that they would not be involved in this fearful time, **“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man”** (Luke 24:36). The apostle Paul states it somewhat differently, but from him it is clear that the church will not enter into that final period: **“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”** (I Thessalonians 5:9). The great tribulation is not for the Church, but rather involves the apostates and the ungodly multitudes on earth.

While the stage is being set for Armageddon, through an unprecedented period of violence on earth, the Church is simultaneously being prepared for the rapture (*parousia*); that is, the quick removal from the earth and to the meeting in the air. The first thing on God’s agenda for the End-Times is the **“gathering together unto him”** (II Thessalonians 1:2:1).

Paul speaks clearly concerning the **“one that letteth [restraineth] will let, until he be taken out of the way”** (II Thessalonians 2:7). It is the Holy Spirit operating within the church, and convicting the unregenerate people, who serves in this capacity. With the removal from the earth of the Church, indwelt by the Spirit, this globe will witness quickly the breakthrough of the evil forces. The same writer speaks about the delusions of the last days. These will engulf all of mankind following the removal of the Church from the earthly theater.

Only a shortsighted individual will fail to see that the present world-wide movements are indicative of the last catastrophic events which will involve the earth during the period of Antichrist.

With all the ill-will and hatreds of the centuries, it is inevitable that a climax will be reached. Ideological tensions, political quarrels, and the struggle for supremacy by the opposing systems, must eventually end in a period of violence. Christian people need to awaken out of their smugness and sleep. Paul writes, **“Our salvation is nearer than when we believed”** (Romans 13:11).

The only reason that the final breakthrough of the evil has not come is that there is one that restraineth, **“until he be taken out of the way”** (II Thessalonians 2:7). Immediately following the rapture of the Church the wicked one will be revealed. The world’s zero hour therefore must be near at hand.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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