

# The Lamp of Prophecy

or

Signs of the Times

by

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### WORLD-WIDE MISSIONS AND THE LORD'S RETURN

**"And the gospel must first be published among all nations"** (Mark 13:10).

YOU WILL remember that our blessed Lord JESUS predicted the destruction of Jerusalem because its people knew not the time of their visitation. His disciples showed Him the magnificent buildings of the temple area, and they said, with pardonable pride, "Lord, behold what great and glorious buildings are here." But He had no eyes for their beauty for His heart was burdened because of the sins and the sorrows of the people. He said, "**There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down**" (Mark 13:2).

With prophetic eye He looked forward to and pictured the time when their enemies should throw a trench around the city, when the dwellings and the marts of commerce, the palaces, and the very temple of GOD should be in ruins, when at last the desolation should be so complete that, as Isaiah had predicted, Zion should be ploughed as a field.

When this prophecy was spoken, it seemed that there was no possibility of its fulfillment, and yet within a very short time it was fulfilled to the letter. One of the striking evidences of its accuracy is that for over fifteen hundred years Mount Zion has been as a great wheat field and has been ploughed from year to year, as the prophet predicted, while the stones of the sacred buildings in Jerusalem were so truly cast down that not one was left upon another.

When our Lord spoke these words, the disciples found them almost unbelievable and afterward, when they stood with Him on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the city, they asked Him three questions.

Notice these questions and their import:

**"When shall these things be? When shall Jerusalem be destroyed, when will the city be so utterly ruined as Thou hast predicted?"**

**"What shall be the sign of Thy coming? How will we know that Thy coming has drawn nigh?"**

"What shall be the sign that the end of the age is upon us - the end of the age of Gentile times during which Israel is suffering affliction and the Land of Palestine is under alien domination?"

Our Lord answers these questions, but in order to get His answers in their fulness, it is necessary to read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, the thirteenth chapter of Mark, and the twenty-first chapter of Luke.

In these three great prophetic passages He goes into these questions and answers them in detail.

**"When shall these things be?"**

In Luke 21:20, He says: **"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."**

Notice again the accuracy of prophecy; not merely when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with an army but - with armies - in the plural. The Lord says, "When you shall see that, you will know that all hope for the city is gone."

**"Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled . . . Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."**

These things have already taken place.

In A. D. 70, Jerusalem was compassed about with the armies of the Romans, under Titus, and was destroyed and for nineteen hundred years since, it has been trodden down of the Gentiles. The day of its deliverance is very near. Already GOD has begun to make bare His arm in behalf of Jerusalem; marvelous things have taken place there and in the Land of Palestine within the last fifteen years. GOD is working for the complete restoration of His people Israel, as predicted in prophecy.

**"What shall be the sign of Thy coming?"**

Our Lord's answer to this is, **"Consider the fig-tree"**; and the fig-tree is the well-known symbol of Israel - of the Jews.

That fig-tree for nineteen hundred years has been dried up from the roots like the fig-tree that JESUS pronounced a curse upon that day when He was seeking fruit and found nothing but leaves. In our day the fig-tree is beginning to manifest signs of life. National consciousness has come back to Israel; they have a flag of their own. Today their own country has been opened to them as a Jewish homeland, and the Jews of the world are looking toward it. But this is not all that is involved in the budding of the fig-tree, because there must be more than mere national movement to indicate that the end times are right upon us.

There must be a spiritual awakening in Jewry. That full awakening will come after the church of GOD has been caught up from this scene.

**"Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"**  
(Romans 11:25).

The fulness of the Gentiles will come in when GOD has finished His present work of grace, and taken out from among the Gentiles a people for His name - when the Body of CHRIST is completed and **"the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

That will be the fulness of the Gentiles. Then GOD's present work will come to a close, and the scales will fall from Israel's eyes. The veil will be torn away from their hearts, and they will discern CHRIST in their own Bible and will realize that the JESUS whom their fathers crucified was indeed their Messiah.

But the marvelous thing is that already there are great movements in Israel.

It is estimated that more Jews have turned to CHRIST and have been baptized in the thirty years of this century than in perhaps a number of centuries before this. Thousands of Jews, yes, scores of thousands have turned to CHRIST in Central Europe and in other parts of the world; and so the fig-tree is beginning to bud and blossom, telling the story that He is near, even at the door.

But the Lord gave them another word. He as much as said, "You are not to be constantly watching for signs, constantly straining your eyes to see just when the end of the age will come, thinking all the time about when the new age will begin. You have the responsibility in this present age of evil and it is this, to **'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'**"

You remember how His disciples came to Him after the resurrection and said, **"Master, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?"** That was just another way of putting the old question:

**"What will be the sign of the end of the age?"**

Our Lord says to them, **"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power"** (Acts 1:7).

How I wish that I could sound that word down into the very soul of everyone who is trying to set dates for the coming of the Lord! It is not for you to know! That is what JESUS said, and He has never revoked it. It is not for you to know. After this, if you try to figure out the date for the close of this age, if you try to find out from the mystic numbers of Daniel and Revelation just when the times of the Gentiles will end, remember, you are sure to be wrong, for it is not for you to know that.

**"But," He says, "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).**

It is as though He said to them, "While you are looking on to the time when I am coming to reign, you are not to sit down and watch for signs, but you are to keep busy carrying my Gospel to the ends of the earth," and so in Mark 13, after He has given them a great many signs, He says, **"And the gospel must first be published among all nations."**

I have purposely read Mark's text because I know very well that if I read the text from Matthew, some of my ultra-dispensational brethren would come to me and say, "My dear brother, do you not know the difference between the Gospel of the grace of GOD and the gospel of the Kingdom?"

The gospel of the Kingdom is the announcement of the Lordship of CHRIST.

The Gospel of the grace of GOD is that great and glorious message that I have been trying to carry throughout the world for forty years, that glorious message of free grace through a crucified, risen, and glorified Saviour.

But on the other hand, I remember that the Apostle Paul went everywhere preaching the Kingdom of GOD as well as proclaiming the grace of GOD. But here in Mark's Gospel you notice how careful the Holy Ghost is; He does not speak of the gospel of the Kingdom. He simply says, **"And the gospel must first be published among all nations."**

We are looking for Him. Would you like to bring Him back? Remember, **"The gospel must first be published among all nations."**

We say sometimes that there are certain closed countries where the Gospel has not gone; but, of course, we do not actually know whether the Gospel has gone there. GOD may have many witnesses of whom we know nothing. Our responsibility, however, is this - to go with the Gospel into all the world, to every nation of the earth.

If we cannot go ourselves, we are to have fellowship with others who do go, and to pray the Lord of the harvest that He will thrust forth workers into the field. Then, after He thrusts them out, we are to help keep them out by sending the means needed.

This is our part and our responsibility. Are you looking for the coming of the Lord? Do you love His appearing? The quickest way to bring Him back is to send out the message to those who have never heard.

The Holy Ghost tells us that the reason CHRIST has not returned is that there are still people to be reached with the Gospel.

In II Peter 3:4, we read of those who asked, **"Where is the promise of his coming?"** And He declared, **"Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning**

**of the creation."**

But the Apostle says, "**The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**"

We are no more anxious for Him to come than He is to return.

**"The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain"** (James 5:7).

I am quite sure that He intends us to see something symbolical there. I believe the early rain was when the Apostles went unto the ends of the earth with the Gospel of CHRIST.

They started out as a little band of twelve men, and in three hundred years had overthrown the idolatry of the Roman Empire. They had carried the Gospel to every part of the known world. But declension and worldliness followed. Then there came the dark ages when the church left her first love and gross superstition prevailed. Then the Spirit wrought afresh and produced the glorious reformation when the precious truth of justification by faith alone was preached, and with that came the opening of the Word of GOD, and one truth after another was brought before the people.

The last one hundred and fifty years have been the greatest missionary years since the days of the Apostles; and what marvels GOD hath wrought!

You hear people talk about "**signs and wonders**," about miracles, - etc., and they look at you solemnly and quote, "**He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do also; because I go unto my Father**" (John 14:12); and they take this to mean the miracles of healing and talking in tongues!

Put all those miracles together, and you would not have anything so great as that miracle when JESUS called Lazarus out of the tomb after he had been dead four days, and that other remarkable sign when He and His disciples were in the little ship and the storm came up, and they said, "**Lord, save us; we perish.**"

And JESUS said to them, "**Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?**" and to the wind, He said, "**Peace**"; and to the waves, "**Be still.**" Immediately there was a great calm. Whoever wrought miracles like these? But JESUS spent all of His days in Palestine, except when as a babe He was taken to Egypt. There He did all His works, and when at last He ascended into Heaven, as a result of His glorious ministry on earth, about five hundred brethren were there to see Him go up.

But ten days later, when the Holy Ghost came, at the very first meeting of the new dispensation, three thousand were converted, and a few days afterwards the number of those who believed became about five thousand, and then the work went on and on till millions knew the Saviour's love. And just think what has been wrought in these last days, in these wonderful missionary days, just before He comes back again!

I am persuaded that what He is doing now is sending out the last call to the Gentiles in order to complete the bride of the Lamb and then He is coming to take His own to be with Himself. I know that after that Jewish missionaries will carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth, but I want to impress upon you our responsibility to publish the Gospel to the people of our day while we are waiting for His return.

Think, for instance, of John G. Paton going to the New Hebrides (the cannibal islands) and years after being able to say, "When we came, there wasn't a Christian; when we left, there wasn't a heathen."

That did not mean that everybody had been born again, but that cannibalism had disappeared and all of them had the light of the Gospel. Think of the miracles that have been wrought in China, India, Africa, and the Islands of the Sea. As I have heard the missionaries of the Cross tell of the marvelous things that GOD has done in these heathen lands, I have thought, "These are the **'greater things'** that we are to do because CHRIST has gone to the Father."

Unsaved one, GOD is not willing that you should perish.

His great loving heart looked upon you and saw you in your sin and "**God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**"

He wants you to come and be saved and is waiting until the last soul of this dispensation says, "I won't have Him; I don't want Him"; then He is going to rise and shut the door and the day of grace for Christendom will be over. Hear Him saying, "**Turn ye, oh, turn ye, for why will ye die?**" Why die in your sins when CHRIST has died that those sins may be forever put away?

The heralds of the Cross are fast publishing the Gospel in all nations. Soon this witness-testimony will be completed. If it ends tonight, what about your soul? Then the door will be shut for guilty, apostate Christendom. Enter now while the day of grace is still here.

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