

15. A FINAL SURVEY: 1945 TO THE PRESENT TIME

WE are now in the 1970s and the signs of the times indicate clearly that this present Order is about to end with the return from heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The ending of the last world war in 1945 was marked by an event of world-shaking significance, namely the dropping of two atomic bombs by the United States which destroyed two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The implications for the future were immediately perceived and made a great impact on the people of the world. The United States hoped it would be able to preserve to itself the secret of the manufacture and development of these nuclear missiles. But it was not long before Russia became possessed of the secret. During the past twenty-five years these fearful weapons have been developed to a terrifying degree, and afford us a more vivid conception of the Spirit's description of the coming world crisis, namely, "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time".

Reviewing briefly the political developments arising out of the Second World War, two features stand out as remarkable signs of the times. One is the emergence of Russia from a peasant backward power to a great Colossus able to threaten the peace of the world. She now rivals the United States in technological achievements in the fields of science, manufacture, war material and space exploration. Professing to be a socialist and communist power, she is cruelly despotic. Her treatment of Czechoslovakia revealed her true character, described by Bro. Dr. Thomas as "one of the most terrible and scorching despotisms that ever wrung the heart of nations". (Exposition of Daniel, Sec. 26.)

The second outstanding feature has been the establishment of the State of Israel as a sovereign power. The Proclamation took place in May 1948 when Britain relinquished the Mandate for Palestine. The new State immediately opened the doors of the homeland to any Jews from any part of the world. The development of the State has been phenomenal in spite of the unceasing hostility of the surrounding Arab nations. In 1969 there were 2,434,000 Jews in the land.

As a result of the remarkable 6-day war of June 1967 when the Jews crushingly defeated the Arab armies of Egypt, Jordan and Syria, Jerusalem for the first time since the Babylonian captivity was freed entirely of Gentile domination, and came under control of the sovereign Jewish state. This was a great sign of the times in view of the Lord's words, "and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

At the time of writing, May 1970, Israel holds much former Arab territory and her armed forces control the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. Egypt's defeat by the Israelis in 1967 was also a humiliation for Russia, which had supplied a great part of the weapons used by the

Egyptian forces. Russia has now re-armed Egypt and sent technicians and instructors to ensure that effective use is made of the sophisticated weapons it has supplied if hostilities break out again. Israel seeks direct talks with the Arab nations and will not agree to peace terms made over her head by the great powers. Both Russia and U.S.A. are conscious that the delicate situation in the Middle East could easily flare up into a confrontation and armed conflict between them both.

For the brethren and sisters of Christ, these are the days when we can take full comfort from the divine assurance, "all things are for your sakes". The unseen, but all-powerful manipulators of the situation are the angels, that excel in strength and who do God's will. They are preparing for the final crisis which will lead to the fall of the Great Image, representing the Kingdom of Men, followed by the grinding to powder of the broken fragments and the setting up on earth of the Kingdom of God. These, then, are the days when the brethren and sisters of Christ are bidden to look up and lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh.

But we are not to look on just as interested spectators. We are bidden, firstly, to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. The Truth must enter deep into our hearts as well as our heads. We are to preserve it inviolate, and to have no fellowship with those who would compromise any single doctrine or commandment of that Truth. Secondly we are to provoke (that is, stir up,) one another unto love and good works. Thirdly, we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and fourthly, we are to exhort one another, **AND SO MUCH THE MORE AS WE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING.**

Our position of firmness in the matter of the doctrine of fellowship has been hard won. Our young members particularly must beware not to let friendships blur the line of separation between ourselves and those of other fellowships. They will meet from time to time those who will assure them that "we are all one", that past controversies are dead and buried, and that everything would be so much better if we dropped all talk about divisions and got together. Those who are alive to the obligations of the Truth will turn a deaf ear to such talk.

These are days when our children in school and college are subject to the faith destroying talk of the evolutionists, humanists and atheists. To counteract this evil influence there is no substitute for careful home training. Let the parents themselves set the good example by living the Truth, reading the Word day by day and getting the children to join in the reading as soon as they are old enough. If the parents miss meetings which they could attend, children will soon notice the fact. Let the parents take an interest in the children's Sunday School lessons and proofs.

In Britain we have the inestimable benefit of many brethren and sisters in fellowship and ecclesias within easy reach. But let us ever remember those scattered throughout the world, in small numbers, widely separated in distance from others in fellowship. By prayer, correspondence, and other means, let us do all we can to lighten their loneliness and encourage them to hold fast. There will be a warm welcome by the Master for those who, amid discouraging surroundings, have maintained their integrity and love to the end.

A cheering feature in recent years has been the spread of the Truth in Ghana. Our brethren there need our prayers and support, and such help and wise counsel as can be given by letter, and when possible by personal contact.

So in concluding this brief survey we can all take courage. The signs of the times tell us plainly that we are now very near the end of our journey. Let us all comport ourselves so that when we are called suddenly into the presence of Christ we may be ready.

“BLESSED ARE THOSE SERVANTS WHOM THE LORD WHEN HE COMETH SHALL FIND WATCHING.”

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