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Your Redemption Draweth Nigh

THE LATE ALFRED B. BUXTON, M.A.

A FEW days ago, speaking of these times with a little Jewish tailor, he drew my attention to a short article in the *Jewish Weekly*. This stated that as we look at the great Beasts portrayed in the visions of Daniel, whatever their mystery, we notice one thing, they all come to their end, and that to-day we may expect the Messiah.

To what passage have you turned in this crisis? One to which I have looked is Daniel xi., with its continual narrative of the King of the South, and the King of the North. Asked what I made of it, I replied I felt like Daniel, and "my cogitations much troubled me." Undoubtedly, however, Daniel xi. 21 to the close of the Book holds the secret which we need to-day, namely, the significance of the world events now happening.

The interpreters of the chapter consider that the King of the North represents successive Kings of Syria and the King of the South successive Kings of Egypt. They all agree that Antiochus Epiphanes is portrayed from xi. 21 onwards, and the "abomination that maketh desolation," was the climax of his conquest of Palestine by pollution of the Sanctuary and the erection of the image of Jupiter. This was all fulfilled in 168 B.C., and is recorded in the Book of the Maccabees.

In reading through these verses what strikes one most is the constant repetition of the two simple words, "the end." Take a red pencil and underline them from Daniel xi. 27 onwards to the close of the Book. Those two words occur about eight times.

This immediately links this passage with Matthew xxiv. Christ had said one stone of the Temple would not be left

upon another, and the disciples asked: "When shall these things come to pass?" "What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?" Take your red pencil again and mark those two words, "the end," occurring in the first fourteen verses. "The end" is obviously "the end." It must refer to the same event in both Daniel xi. and Matthew xxiv. But the disciples had first asked concerning the destruction of the Temple which in their own minds was connected with the end. Christ did not attempt to correct this, for it was "the end" of the Jewish dispensation which the Temple represented. He merely answered for both events—the end of the Jewish dispensation and the end of the times of the Gentiles. This latter is a parenthesis in Jewish history to enable the gathering of the people of God out of all nations (in order to fulfil the world-wide aspect of the Covenant to Abraham) and had not been revealed to the disciples. In fact, it was not revealed until Peter preached the Gospel in the House of Cornelius and the Holy Ghost fell on the Gentiles.

In the same way, though the latter half of Daniel xi. may have had a fulfilment in 168 B.C., yet it was to have another in A.D. 70 at the end of the Jewish dispensation, but awaits its final fulfilment at the end of the times of the Gentiles (Dan. xii. 1, 2).

In Matthew xxiv. our Lord links His own prophecy to Daniel's. Naturally He does not mention Antiochus because that fulfilment was already history, but instead speaks only of the still future fulfilments. Daniel as it turns out had made a prophecy which contained three fulfilments. Christ made a prophecy concerned with the last two of these fulfilments.

Since Daniel's prophecy serves three different events, it is obvious that some of the points will be true of all three events, others of only two, or even of only one. In the same way with Christ's prophecy, which deals with the last two events of Daniel's prophecy—some of it will be true of one event or the other, some of it true of both events.

Thus the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and the Christians who were in Jerusalem did as Christ commanded and fled to the mountains, thus being saved. Whether, however, this command will be relevant in the circumstances of "the end" we do not know and we need not concern ourselves.

Our main need as preachers and teachers is to realize that the only fulfilment now left of these two vital passages is the final one at "the end," i.e. "the end of the world." The historic fulfilments of 168 B.C. and A.D. 70 are types of what will happen at "the end." These former fulfilments are on a small scale in the then known world, but the final fulfilment must be on a truly world-wide scale. These final events will not only affect the Jews (children of Abraham according to the flesh) and the small world in which they dwelt; but they will affect the Universal Church (children of Abraham by the Spirit) and the whole wide world in which it is placed. For "God so loved the world"—His final purpose includes it all.

But the signs of the coming fulfilments of A.D. 70 and of the final "end" are in general the same. The Lord speaks of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes as the beginning of sorrows, but "the end is not yet." Next He speaks of the Church—false prophets, persecutions, and coldness. Then He gives the two key-signs. Firstly that the Gospel shall "be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations and then shall the end come": and secondly He links with this in the next verse, "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet."

These two signs are like the two pointers of the compass showing us where we are. Daniel also links these two events together. In one verse he says: "they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate" and in the next, "the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits and they that understand shall instruct many."

Christ's whole prophecy with these two key-signs was first fulfilled on a small scale between A.D. 33 (when the preaching of the Gospel began) and A.D. 70 (when Titus destroyed the Temple). Thus, at Pentecost Peter claimed that the outpouring of the Spirit on Jews and Proselytes was the fulfilment of what Joel said concerning "the last days." God promised to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh; to show wonders; to darken the sun; to save whosoever shall call. Peter speaks of the "wonders" God had done through Jesus, the Crucifixion when the sun was darkened, and Christ exalted at the right Hand of God pouring out the Spirit. So he invites all to repent and believe in the Name of Jesus Christ for salvation. This preaching of the Gospel to Jews

and Proselytes " out of every nation under heaven " and the conversion of three thousand of them (coupled with the other signs) no doubt made Peter feel that Christ might return at any time. He did not know then what he began to learn when the Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household, namely that God had a far greater purpose for the world than the little calling out from Jews and specially Gentiles which had happened at Pentecost.

In Acts we read of a great famine, earthquakes, persecution of the Church, false teachers. But above all the first key-sign was fulfilled—the preaching of the Gospel throughout the known world. That this was really done in the full sense in which Christ meant, is shown by the fact that at the end of his life Paul wrote to the Colossians of " the Gospel, which was preached to every creature "—the very words of the great Commission. No wonder then that, remembering the signs of the end prophesied by Christ, the apostles wrote in their epistles of His possible immediate return.

Then a few years later the second key-sign was given. Titus entered Jerusalem and the Temple was defiled and destroyed, as Christ foretold. But Christ did not come. It was not " *the end.*" This was only an " abomination of desolation." Titus proved to be only a type of " that Wicked " whom Paul has said must come before Christ returns (2 Thess. ii. 1). Instead other prophecies were fulfilled. The Jews were scattered, and the Times of the Gentiles began. God began calling out from all nations a people for Himself, so that his promise to Abraham would have a truly world-wide fulfilment.

In our day we have seen all these signs *again* coming to pass. But for the first time they are doing so in a truly *world-wide way*. As to wars involving the world. Consider the Great War of 1918, the Ethiopian War, the War between China and Japan (involving a quarter of the world's population), and now the present war. As regards pestilence, consider the world-wide influenza of 1919. As regards earthquakes, consider the world-wide chain, Messina, Kobe, San Francisco, Quetta, etc. As regards famines, consider the food shortage after the last war, the destitution of two or three million in China recently. As regards persecutions, consider Russia and Germany with their anti-God campaigns: consider the false prophets in the Churches.

As regards the preaching of "the Gospel for a witness unto all nations." Consider what Dr. Kilgour of the Bible Society writes in his new book, *The Bible Throughout the World*. He estimates that, if they were able to read, at least nine-tenths of mankind are now supplied with some portion of God's Word (and usually a Gospel is the first book of the Bible to be translated) in a tongue they could understand. That is the world-wide "witness" of the printed page, and how much more complete is the witness of the spoken word! Therefore in the sense interpreted by Paul, the Gospel has probably now been preached "to every creature under heaven" and gone out "for a witness unto all nations."

In this connection there are two remarkable facts. Firstly, in spite of the war, the Government has continued to allow missionaries, including recruits, to go out to the foreign field. Secondly, the foreign Missionary Societies have continued to receive funds in a wonderful way. So much for the fulfilment of this sign of World Evangelization, which, as you remember, is one of the two key-signs.

As regards the second—"When ye shall see the abomination of desolation (spoken of by Daniel the prophet) stand in the holy place"—we cannot tell what form this will take before the actual return of Christ. But consider the things that accompany it—the King of the North and the King of the South. Consider Hitler and Mussolini. Read Daniel ii. 36, and 2 Thess. ii. 3-12, and then consider Hitler's boasting, his defiling of the churches, his allowing himself to be set forth as God, and his persecutions of God's people the Jews, and God's people the Christians. These may be only the leaves of the fig tree, not the summer itself.

We dare not be dogmatic. We were told to look for signs, not dates. We were warned that it is not for us to know "the times," any more than it was for Daniel or for Peter. The latter warns us that with God a thousand years is as one day. On that reckoning the crucifixion only happened the day before yesterday!

But having said all this we submit that it is hardly likely that there is any other fulfilment left for Daniel ii., or Matthew xxiv., than the final one. The signs are world-wide, and the world-wide Kingdom of Christ is at hand. It may be already Michael's war to cast out Satan has begun in Heaven (Daniel. xii. 1; Revelation xii.).

For us Christians the trend of events is obvious, but the central fact in the welter of all this remains: "They that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits." This is no time for timidity, for inactivity, for dejection; this is the moment for courage based on the hope of His coming, for active evangelism, for endurance to the end.

These are the days when, according to the interpretation of Joel's prophecy as given to Peter, we can expect a new outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. This is not the moment to keep big reserves in the Bank; to husband resources; to consider long programmes. In a night all our endowments and accumulated funds may be gone. This is war—"war on the saints," and war by the saints. It is the moment to fight, to suffer, and then to conquer at the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is written of this end time "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and because they loved not their lives unto death." Have we the vision, the faith and the courage for that?

THE CITY OF PEACE.

O Heavenly City, timeless dwelling-place,
 Where we shall meet the Loved Ones, face to face,
 To thee our thoughts ascend, our hopes aspire,
 Whose bulwarks gleam, touched by no earthly fire.

Eternal are thy courts: immortal life
 Bides there, triumphant over death and strife.
 Sin cannot enter, and no sorrows come
 To mar the glory of the Soul's true home.

Here, amid mortal mists, we grope our way;
 There, shines the light of everlasting day.
 Here, hate has power; but, in that City fair,
 Love rules alone, for God is present there.

E. H. BLAKENEY.