



The Prophetical Signs

A Sermon By George Müller of Bristol

The first deeply important point in connection with the subject before us is this, - it is certain that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again. It is certain that it is the will of our Heavenly Father that the second coming of Christ should ever be the great hope of the Church of God. Let us increasingly seek to meditate on this, to lay to heart and rejoice in the truth, - Jesus will come again; Jesus will destroy the works of Satan; Jesus will reign; Jesus will be manifested in His kingly office.

Another deeply important point is this, - are we *prepared* for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we, individually, truly converted? The question is not, are we among the number of the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ? Not, are we reckoned among the people of God? But, are we able, on scriptural grounds, to satisfy ourselves that, by the grace of God, we do trust alone in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls? Have we been made to see, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that we are lost, ruined, wicked, guilty sinners; have we confessed this before God, and have we been enabled, after having passed sentence on ourselves, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls? If so, we belong no more to the world, but to the heavenly family. If so, we are regenerated, we are pardoned sinners, we stand justified before God, we have an interest in the intercession of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, and we need not be afraid to hear about His coming. But if this matter is not settled, so long as it is not settled, we have no real peace in our souls. Let me entreat and beseech any here present, not thus prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus, to see to it that they delay no longer to cry earnestly to God to have mercy on them, and to believe in Christ for the salvation of their souls.

Another deeply important point is that we, the professed disciples and true children of God, are practically and experimentally prepared for His return; that is, that the heart is so loose from the world, so set upon heavenly things, so really surrendered to the Lord, and that we are so really and truly out-and-out disciples of Jesus Christ, that to hear about His coming, at any time, is a most precious, pleasant subject to us, because of our affections going out to Him. We long to see Him for ourselves, long to touch those precious hands, once pierced for us on account of our numberless transgressions, to kiss those feet once pierced with great nails on account of our wickedness, long to touch Him for ourselves, and to spend a happy eternity with Him. O, beloved in Christ, let us crave after this experimental preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what next have we to do? To pray that God would *hasten* the return of the Lord, and that He would give us grace, in the meantime, to occupy till Jesus does come again; to pray that while the Lord Jesus Christ is tarrying, that God would graciously, by the mighty power and energy of the Holy Ghost, yet bring innumerable multitudes to the feet of Jesus as believers in Him.

In our subject reference is made to “signs of the times”, but with regard to this allow me to say it becomes us to be very careful.

I remember distinctly, fifty-five years and three months since, in July, 1829, when first my mind was directed to the second coming of Christ, how I made a mistake then. Beloved brethren, at that time interested in prophecy, considered that Palestine would soon be inhabited by the

Israelites, as there was war between Russia and the Ottoman power. It was supposed that Palestine would then be taken out of the hands of the Turks; but in only six weeks' time peace was made between the contending powers. Thus I learned to be careful how I looked on these political matters, and ever since have been particularly cautious not to lay too much stress on such subjects.

Yet, on the other hand, it is the will of the Lord that we *should* look at certain signs. For instance, in the very chapter read to us (Mark xiii), in Matt. xxiv, and many other portions, our Lord directs His disciples to look for certain events, and to know from them whether His coming is at hand or not; that is to say, He declares that such and such things must first come to pass, and except they do come to pass the end will not be. Therefore our Lord Himself directs the minds of His Church to look for certain predicted events, and to consider them as signs of His return.

Further, the apostle Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, brings before them this deeply important point on which we do well to meditate. Let us read in the second chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians: - "Now we beseech you, brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first". Except there come the Apostasy first. Not merely bad times in the Church, such as coldness, deadness, lukewarmness, lifelessness, but the *Apostasy*. Now what is the *Apostasy*? Entire rejection of everything that is divine; the fulfilment of the second Psalm, - "let us break their bands asunder and case away their cords from us"; let us have neither God, Christ, nor anything divine: the setting up themselves, the denying everything that is divine, the rejecting even the *form* of godliness, this is the *Apostasy* referred to.

My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, this has not been fulfilled in Popery. It is *anti-Christian* altogether. Popery is opposed to the written Word of God; Popery is a diabolical system, but it pretends to honour the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, in Popery the *Apostasy* has not come to pass.

"And that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." The Pope is not here referred to; though he is a fearful servant of Satan, and there were Popes who were most manifestly particular servants of the wicked one. But here Popes are not referred, for the individual, the son of perdition, the lawless one, is not an ecclesiastical person, but a mighty monarch who will be at the head of the restored ten kingdoms of the Roman empire, which will all then be under his control. A mighty monarch to whom Satan will give his power and his seat. This we have to keep before us. Many of these things, though prefigured in Romanism, have yet to be fulfilled.

"Who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing Himself that he is God." This will have its literal fulfilment, according to Daniel and other portions, with regard to the temple to be built again at Jerusalem.

"Whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." This is our comfort; whoever opposes the Lord Jesus Christ, whether an individual, or bodies of people, or lying systems, all, all will be conquered at the last by our Lord Jesus Christ, He will subdue everything that is against Him.

Now the practical point is this; in looking at communism, nihilism, socialism etc, we see that lawlessness is more and more prevailing; that all this wickedness is hastening on the day of the lawless ONE, the son of perdition, and that all we now see is only a preparation for that terrible time.

Then, as regards the Signs of the times with reference to the professing church, a very few words. We have already read this morning a verse out of the 4th chapter of the 1st Epistle to Timothy, - "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron: forbidding to marry, an commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." This, no doubt, in a great measure, has had its fulfilment in Popery, but yet to a far greater extent it *will* have its fulfilment. Then, in regard to the doctrines of devils or demons, we have especially to keep before us, I judge, that reference is here made to spiritualism; and should there be any here present who in the smallest degree look carelessly o spiritualism, or who have the least connection with it, O, let me beseech and entreat you to be warned. This is the horrible sin, the abominable sin, of which Saul was guilty, and on account of which God especially smote him.

This having intercourse with familiar spirits, (not *good* spirits, but devils, evil spirits) though abominable in the sight of God, is looked on as if it were not a matter of much account, and some of the real, true children of God have been entangled with this. O, let me beseech them to confess their sin before God, for it is an awful sin to be connected with this, as it is nothing else than countenancing Satan. As it was considered such an awful sin by Jehovah, let us be on our guard against it.

In reference to Popery one more word. Through the providence of God I have recently had a book placed in my hands in reference to this subject, which I have read with the deepest interest. Though I have been familiar, more or less, with Popery for nearly sixty years, I never saw its abominations, its fearful, horrible wickedness, as I have seen it within the last few months through reading this book; and I cannot help giving you the full title of the book, beseeching all of you who have time to read it to do so, for I know you will bless and praise God for having been directed to it. The title is — "The Secret History of Romanism", by Dawson Massy, D.D., and the Publishers are Hamilton and Adams, London, also Seely, Fleet Street. Dates, names, and documents from which statements are taken, are most minutely given, step by step, so that there can be the fullest reliance on what the Author states. I desire it may be in the hands of the children of God, for we are drifting fast into Romanism. Oh, what an awful thing it is that enlightened *England*, standing out before the nations, century after century, should, little by little, be drifting into Popery. Ah! The thousands upon thousands that have been drifting into Popery since the Emancipation bill was passed in 1829, when I was just come to this country. The Church of Christ awoke then to its fearful consequences. The dear children of God were crying earnestly to God about it, but after I had been a month in this country, in April, 1829, the bill passed. Now I have seen the consequences. At that time a Popish priest was a rare thing in England, and as for monasteries and nunneries, not one was to be found, but at present you can count them by hundreds, and the priests by thousands. And having seen all this, how things have altered since I came to England fifty-five years and seven months since, I warn, and beseech, and entreat my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ that they be on their guard regarding their relatives, their parents, their children, and their servants, that they be not entrapped by Satan.

A few words on the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, 3rd chapter — "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." This does not refer to persecution, or great suffering, but to grievous times, difficult times; and notice, the whole passage is not addressed to wicked men; Chinese and Japanese idolaters are not referred to, but professing Christians, those who have the name of Christians, who call themselves Christians. Having a form of Godliness"; - all these individuals pretend to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, make themselves out to be members of Churches to be intimately connected with the people of God, taking their places among them; but, with all this, have the *form* of Godliness only. Now the point, practically, is this, to see to it that we make our calling election sure; to see to it that we have more than the mere form of Godliness; and as God has allowed us to come together to exhort one another, allow a brother to remind you of this, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ.

You see, we ourselves are in the greatest danger of getting, little by little, into such a state of things. Satan will do his utmost to carry us away, if we do not set our faces against the evil that threatens us, like a flint, seeking to act in a completely different way to these individuals. That it may be so, we must surrender our whole heart to God our-and-out; we must be in earnest, and must meditate on these prophetic truths revealed in God's word, that we may not be carried away by the delusions of the devil.

God grant that our eye may be fixed on the coming of Christ. He is coming again, and in the meantime our business is to wait for Him, to glorify Him, and to be occupied in His service till He does come again, so that when at last that day shall arrive, we may be as delighted to receive Christ as He will be delighted to receive His bride to Himself, in order that where He is she may be also.

God grant that thus it may be with every one of us!

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