

"Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"
Matt. xvi. 3.

CHRIST GIVEN SIGNS

begun to be fulfilled and taking place

TO-DAY—NOW.

By J. G. D.

Men are saying:

**"The days are prolonged, and every vision
faileth."—Ezekiel xii. 22.**

but the Lord God saith:

**"There shall none of my words be prolonged
any more; but the word which I have spoken
shall be done."—Ezekiel xii. 28.**

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"Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

Matt. xvi. 3.

CHRIST GIVEN SIGNS.

A sign seems to be some special event or occurrence, it may be extending over a period and intended to attract attention, and to confirm the prophecies, which are Divine foretellings of the future.

There were such, there are such. God has never left Himself without witness, but man in his perverseness disregards what God has given, and wants something else; he will dictate how God is to speak and what the sign is to be. These Pharisees desired to see a sign from heaven—fire from heaven, or some extraordinary convulsion of nature at their will and bidding. Now God had given them a sign from heaven, the greatest He could give, His own beloved Son. He came as the Babe of Bethlehem, Immanuel, God with us; thus fulfilling the promise and sign of Isaiah vii. 14, and was recognised by Simeon and Anna, members of the faithful remnant who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem, as

recorded in Luke ii. This holy Babe grew up as a tender plant before God, and as a root out of a dry ground; and later on was presented to Israel as "a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of them." (Acts ii. 22).

There were ample signs, but the Pharisees were blind and wanted more. Thus they showed themselves a wicked generation—they tempted Christ, hoping to confound Him. The motive of their request was wrong, therefore He would not accede to it.

But later on we find the Lord giving signs to honest enquirers. In Matt. xxiv. 3, His disciples enquire (a) as to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple; (b) as to the sign of His coming, and (c) as to the end of the age—wrongly translated "world." Their question as to the destruction of Jerusalem is answered in Luke xxi. 20-24. That has been literally fulfilled.

I wish now to examine the signs He gave in answer to their other questions—as to His coming and the end of the Age. But long ere this signs had been given to the prophet Daniel, and after the ascension of the Lord

Jesus others were given by the Apostles through the Holy Ghost, according to Christ's word in John xvi. 13, "He will show you things to come." These signs, I believe, are beginning to be fulfilled now, during a period commencing 60 or 80 years ago and probably very near its end. I will consider, first, two given in Daniel; next, twelve given by Christ Himself; and then four given by the Apostles.

Daniel xii. 4: "Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Both these signs are connected with, and will happen at "the time of the end," a time spoken of in many places in Daniel.

SIGN I. "Many shall run to and fro." Eighty years ago the introduction of railways attracted attention to this verse. To-day it is marvellously more significant. There are not only railways spreading like a network in most parts of the earth, but lines of magnificent steamships plying in every direction; electric railways and tramcars—all these carrying their millions of passengers daily with safety and increasing speed. But I need hardly enlarge on what is so obvious.

SIGN II. "Knowledge shall be increased" or "darted." During this period almost universal education has been provided for the masses. State schools, colleges, universities and libraries abound.

In every country there is an enormous issue of newspapers, daily and weekly; also magazines on almost every conceivable subject, with, alas! an enormous supply of lying and pernicious literature. This is devoured by the masses who, like those of old, "do not like to retain God in their knowledge"; so the Bible, the Word of God, the source of all true wisdom, is increasingly discarded by the leaders of thought to-day and is banished from the schools. On the other hand the "knowledge of God" has increased also with some. Books sealed until the time of the end have been unsealed; also much precious truth, lost sight of or corrupted during the dark ages, has been recovered, and thus at the close of Man's Day there is fresh light for the faithful, and the old word is fulfilled, "At eventide it shall be light." Also the Scriptures translated into over 400 languages are being sent out to all nations. Another reading of the word "increased" is

“darted” or flashed. If this is correct it is being strikingly fulfilled by the achievements of telegraphy, especially “wireless.” For by these means and the daily papers we are informed of every important event in the wide world a few hours after its occurrence. Thus “knowledge is increased” and that verse is being fulfilled now as never before.

Now we come to the signs given by Christ Himself. In Luke’s gospel there are two sets which appear at first rather contradictory. In chap. xvii. He says, that as it was in the days of Noah and Lot, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man, and then describes the careless multitude who, heedless of divine warnings, give the rein to their own lusts and pleasures. They are living in “a fool’s paradise”—are optimists, who say “there’s a good time coming,” and look on to a golden age, a millennium of man’s making; and intoxicated by man’s achievements and prowess they look on to the time when Babylon the Great, man’s city (Rev. xviii.) shall have reached the zenith of its magnificence, prosperity, and glory. Thus we have—

SIGN III. “Eating and drinking.” There is something peculiar in this; it does not mean

what mankind has everywhere to do to keep alive. It betokens special abundance, feasting, self-indulgence and riotous living; living to eat, instead of eating to live; disregarding the Lord's word, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat that endureth unto everlasting life;" also His word, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink." Do not make that an object. (Please connect this with Sign 18.)

SIGN IV. "Marriage"—resulting in increase of population, necessitating continuous emigration; and thus have new continents and countries been peopled during this period.

SIGN V. "Buying and selling." Some may say, "Has not this always been going on?" Yes, on a limited scale; but never has there been such vast world-wide commerce as to-day. In a copy of *Public Opinion*, dated September 13, 1912, it is stated that British foreign trade was in the first eight months of that year £58,000,000 more than in the first eight months of 1911. What the total amount reached I do not know. This immense sum is just an increase on the foreign trade alone. Continents have been severed, and new ocean trade routes and highways on sea and land

have been opened to facilitate this immense trade. So is not this present time characterised by "buying and selling" of every conceivable commodity, even of "the souls of men?" (See the list in Rev. xviii. 12, 13.)

SIGN VI. "They planted." Planting is characteristic of the present period. Nearly all North America, Australia, New Zealand, and other regions changed from forest and prairie into fenced and fruitful farms dotted with homesteads; and "planting" has even been commenced in desolate Palestine under the auspices of Jewish millionaires.

SIGN VII. "They builded." Think of the cities and towns that have been built for commerce and pleasure, springing up so rapidly like mushrooms in the new countries that have been peopled and planted, some huge and magnificent, with every modern appliance to render them attractive and up-to-date. Then think of the ships that have been built for commerce, pleasure and for war; and the race for supremacy in size, speed, luxury and battle-power is still going on; and now a new class of ship is being built, with which man is achieving the conquest of the air, and nothing is restrained from him which he has

imagined to do. Think of the railroads that have been built and the marvellous bridges and engineering works necessitated by them. Surely men are building to-day, and that sign is being fulfilled.

Now let us turn to Luke xxi. where we have other very different signs, and see how thoughtful, serious people—pessimists some may call them—regard the outlook at the present time; and please remember that both these sets of signs given by Christ, though apparently so different, are taking place at the same time, and that—to-day.

SIGN VIII. “Signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars” (verse 25), spoken of in the next verse as “the powers of heaven” shaken. We get a little light on this symbolic language by turning to the record of Joseph’s dream given in Gen. xxxvii. 9. Rev. viii. and ix., too, teach us that stars and high dignitaries, “the powers that be” are ordained, commissioned and set in their places by God. I submit that the fulfilment of this has begun, for during recent years two Presidents of the United States of America have been assassinated, also kings, emperors and other men in high position, and many

others are not able to move about freely without a guard continually protecting them.

SIGN IX. "Distress of Nations." I will not enlarge on this, which exists now, and will rapidly increase.

SIGN X. "With perplexity." This most truly describes the condition of many governments to-day, they hardly know how to legislate so as to cope with the new conditions developing. The wisdom of the wise seems at fault, and the policy of one half of the nation is bitterly opposed and denounced by the other, while lawlessness is rapidly increasing. Witness the astounding suffragette movement among the women, whom God commands to be in subjection.

SIGN XI. "The sea and the waves roaring." By turning to Rev. xvii. we get the interpretation of "waters"; they stand for the masses of the peoples in many lands long down-trodden and oppressed. A world-wide upheaval of these is now going on, making their voice heard with no uncertain sound; the movement is with difficulty restrained and seems gathering force for widespread convulsions. Yet Scripture informs us that kingly rule will not be permanently over-

thrown, as at the close ten horns or kings will exist and give their kingdom unto the beast (Rev. xvii. 17.)

SIGN XII. "The budding of the fig tree." The Lord, in Luke xxi. 29, 30 gives one more sign. The fig tree is a well-known figure of the Jewish nation, and of late years there have been distinct movements in connection with it, such as Zionism—the agricultural colonies planted in Palestine and fostered by wealthy Jews, and the return of thousands and thousands of Jews to their own land, and the building of quite a new city outside the walls of old Jerusalem. (See Zech. ii. 4.)

I submit that these signs can be discerned now, and pass on to other signs given by Christ, perhaps not quite so evident.

SIGN XIII. "The binding of the tares in bundles," Matt. xiii. 30, preceding the gathering of the wheat into the barn.

What I write is simply suggestive, but I press that these words of Christ mean something very important; that they have never yet been fulfilled, but must be some time. Is not the fulfilment going on now? The formation of the bundles is apparent though the agency that accomplishes it is not. Angelic ministry

seldom is apparent. That recorded in Dan. x. 13, certainly was not, nor are their present ministrations for them who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. i. 14). What is apparent is the formation of the bundles, composed of people—the children of the wicked in contrast with the children of the kingdom. Now man acts on the motto, "Union is strength," which, if we leave God out of the matter, is pretty true. Man's confederacies began far away back, as recorded in Gen. xi.; they have been tried again and again, as recorded in Psalm ii., but it is a vain thing they imagine when men set themselves against God and His Anointed; moreover, future gigantic confederacies are foretold in Rev. xix. and xx., with their inevitable results.

Long ago God gave fair warning what the results of such associations would be: "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces: give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces." Isaiah viii. 9. Then the Lord instructed his servants (ver. 11) not to join the confederacy, not to walk in the way of the people forming it; not to fear their fear, but to sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, to fear

Him, and He engaged to be a sanctuary and a safeguard for all those who fear and trust Him.

Man is acting out his motto to-day. Unions, companies, clubs, societies for every conceivable purpose; religious, commercial, philanthropic, and social; good, bad, or indifferent, are being formed on every hand. It is hard to keep clear of them. The cry, "Come with us, cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse," is uttered still and seems very friendly and plausible. But God's people are to "dwell alone" (Num. xxiii. 9), and nothing but listening to wisdom's words will safeguard us. We get them in Proverbs as well as the call of the foolish, and we get them in the Epistle to the Corinthians, which tells of the formation of a new Divine fellowship that God is calling His people to—the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This is to eclipse and take precedence of every other. The Church of God! The Body of Christ! This is what the Spirit of God is now forming. How much do we know or care about it—that which is so dear to Christ?

But I have enlarged too much and must return to the "bundles." The most extensive, numerous and powerful are the trade unions,

which their leaders are trying even now to amalgamate into one vast international confederacy, which is to dictate to all governments and, if it could succeed, become such a tyranny as the world has never known. They seek to compel all workers to join them and obey their commands; such as refuse not to be allowed to buy or sell (their work and labour), and are subjected to abuse and persecution. They are acting in the way Anti-christ will a little later on, as described in Rev. xiii. 11-17.

But some may object, "Do you mean to say that all members of these societies are tares, children of the wicked one? Is not that very uncharitable?" I at once answer, "No, I do not." I said above that some societies were for good purposes, and I have no doubt that in most there are many true saints of God mixed up. Plenty of God's people are in very wrong company and in very wrong places—as Lot in Sodom; David when marching with the Philistine armies against Israel; or Peter standing and warming himself with the servants of the high priest; and such incidents in their history are given, not as examples to be followed, but as warnings showing how low it is possible for even a true saint of God to fall.

But Rev. xviii. makes it quite clear. There Babylon the Great is presented as having reached the height of its splendour and greatness, but it is then "the hold of every foul spirit and a habitation of demons"; and yet, alas! saints of God are there too, as we learn from the call to them to come out, in verse 4. This call would not have been needed had they been obedient to Scriptures God had given long before, such as 2 Cor. vi. 14, forbidding "the unequal yoke" with unbelievers or fellowship between light and darkness.

In Matt. xxv. we have one more sign given by our Lord.

SIGN XIV. "The midnight cry, 'Behold the Bridegroom.'" The parable itself is a prophecy, but the cry is a sign, and I think there is no doubt it has gone forth and has been sounded world-wide during the last 80 years; and it has resulted in an awakening, a widespread activity among the wise and even foolish, among true saints and nominal professors. I shall now consider signs in Apostolic writings.

SIGN XV. "Saying, Peace and safety." This is clearly the language of those we have

considered in Luke xvii. Their actions as well as their words show that they expect a time of quiet prosperity: there would not be extensive building and planting if they anticipated everything being broken up soon. But man's words are not worth much, and in divine matters are always wrong. Man may say "Peace"; he has continually done so before. See Jer. vi. 14, "Saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace"; also Jer. xiv. 13. But only God can make peace and only God can speak peace. He has done so and is doing so still through the Lord Jesus Christ, but if that is refused there is no peace and safety elsewhere, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, which shall devour the adversaries.

But the governments of the world, or say of Europe, have of late years been honestly seeking to promote peace and safety, to lessen and, if possible, do away with the horrors of war by the notable Hague conferences. They have not been very successful, and it is only by being thoroughly prepared for war that peace can be preserved at all. This must be so till human nature changes, or Christ rules the nations with His rod of iron. Still there are the anti-militarists, also Quakers and many

good well-meaning people whose present cry is peace and who think it can be brought about in the face of the clearest testimony of Scripture to the contrary.

SIGN XVI. "Perilous times," as described in II. Timothy. In chapter iii. we have prophecy rather than a distinct sign, and it presents not the abominations of the Gentile world like Romans i., but the character of the religious professors of the last days of Christendom, rather than their actions. It gives minute details which are clearly recognisable in the present day.

Two features stand out very prominently: the one, the "love of pleasure" more than of God; and the other, "a form of godliness" with the power denied. Love of pleasure characterises increasingly the present day. It is true not only of the careless ungodly world with its races and sports of every description, but it has laid hold of the religious world too. It has captured the so-called Sabbath—the churches are emptying. "Men won't go to church" is the remark of the present day, and enticing schemes are devised to get them there; while the love of pleasure has in many places turned the church grounds into tennis-courts.

Great Britain, a professedly Christian country, has more than 3,500 golf courses, involving an expenditure of £7,000,000, and she spends more annually on golf balls alone than she does on foreign missions.

But in chap. iv. we have a more definite sign—"a turning away from the truth to fables." I beg earnest attention to this. The truth, the faith, has been delivered to the saints. (Jude 3.) The church was responsible to hold fast what it had received, to contend for the faith against all adversaries: to be the pillar and stay (margin) of the truth.

There is such a thing as "the truth," also "a way of Truth," and a Spirit of truth who bears witness to Him Who is the Truth. Men have had it, the record of Christ, God's very best gift, and they are turning away from it to fables, vile, contemptible emanations from the father of lies; some turning back to Buddhism, under the pious pretence of searching for the truth, as if it had not come. This connects with—

SIGN XVII. The "falling away," spoken of in 2 Thess. ii. 11, preceding the revelation of the Man of Sin. Paul in his old age could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the

faith." (2 Tim. iv. 7.) What did he keep and believe? Not only on the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, but he believed (Acts xxiv. 14) all things written in the law and in the prophets—"the law" meaning the five books of Moses. But men in this 20th century are wiser than Paul, and they discard Moses and his writings, in face also of these words of Christ: "He (Moses) wrote of Me: but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" The apostacy has begun and is nearly consummated.

SIGN XVIII. is in James v. This remarkable passage tells of two distinct but antagonistic classes which have come distinctly into view of late years, rich men or millionaires, and the labourers.

The rich men have heaped up treasure in the last days and they are living in pleasure on the earth—wanton, as described in Sign 3; spending fortunes on dress, jewellery, banqueting, and every sort of luxury. But their enormous wealth is often ill-gotten, and utters a cry; and the labourers, much of whose hire (they are not slaves as in bygone days) is fraudulently kept back—they send out cries, loud ones, manward and heavenward, and

God has heard, and a dark day is coming.

Here I quote from an American writer, who says: "Enormous corporations and money kings are now chafing millions of the poor to the verge of insurrection. The mine is laid, the dynamite is in order, ten thousand circumstances are focalising to this consummation. Jesus has but to come and gather out His saints, who are the real life-preservers of this corrupt world, and the devil will strike the match to light the fires of revolution from zone to zone, and the peoples of the earth will lie foaming under the wrath of demons. 'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.'" (Rev. xii. 12.)

But I must not enlarge further, and other signs must remain unnoticed. I am not writing a book on prophecy, but just a pamphlet to call attention to certain signs given by our Lord which are being rapidly fulfilled; so we need His repeated warnings to take heed, to watch, and to pray. * I will conclude with His words in Luke xxi. 28, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption

draweth nigh." A good word this, "Look up," from the deepening darkness below to the Blessed One above. We look unto Him and we are lightened. We are waiting for a Person—God's Son, God's Man. He is coming; first into the air for His saints, then to earth with His saints. There will be an interval between these, not very long though, but we must not confuse them.

The first of these events is the bright hope of the church, which will be caught away, it may be at any moment, and thus be kept from the hour of temptation which is to try them that dwell on the earth. There is no sign to be looked for in connection with that, now that the midnight cry has gone forth.

The second event is the coming spoken of all through the prophets, and will bring deliverance to Israel and to the godly ones who have passed through the great tribulation.

J. G. D.

Lord, we see the day approaching,
When Thou wilt again appear;
Sinners still Thy garments touching,
Stay Thee in Thy coming here.

Coming judgments round us darken,
Human hearts may fail for fear ;
But to Thee alone we hearken,
Thy redemption draweth near.

Make each waiting child obedient,
Stay our anxious hearts on this ;
If Thy going were expedient,
Surely Thy return is bliss.

Our own Lord is coming hither,
Light in darkness, joy in grief ;
Hope deferred would quickly wither
Hearts that had not this relief.

Hid in heaven is all our treasure,
Patience then becomes thy saints ;
Lord, we wait Thy gracious pleasure,
Faith should silence all complaints.



“And the angel whom I saw stand on the sea and on the earth lifted up his right hand to the heaven, and swore by Him that lives to the ages of ages . . . that there should be no longer delay.”—Rev. x. 5, 6. (New Trans.)