

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

## **SPECIAL ISSUE**

### Current Events In The Light Of Prophecy

"Know, then, with a living, spiritual knowledge which moves you to prepare and be ready, that the end of all things is at the doors!

"Learn . . . and know . . . and watch . . . and be ready!"

See "Knowing the Nearness of the End"

— page 434

## CONTENTS

## Meditation —

Knowing the Nearness of the End . . . . . 434

## Editorial —

Prophecy and Current Events . . . . . 437

War as a Sign of Christ's Coming . . . . . 439

Christ's Coming Foreshadowed in Creation . . . . . 442

The Second Beast . . . . . 445

Cults — Sign of Christ's Coming . . . . . 447

Unequally Yoked . . . . . 449

The Coming of Antichrist . . . . . 451

## The Preaching of the Gospel as a

Sign of Christ's Coming . . . . . 453

News From Our Churches . . . . . 455

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## MEDITATION

## Knowing the Nearness of the End

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

*Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.*

Matthew 24:32, 33

Learn the parable (not: "a parable") of the fig tree.

It is right before your eyes.

And it is very simple and easy to understand — if only you have eyes to see and ears to understand.

The things of the kingdom of heaven take place



in parables. The latter are not merely contrived earthly stories with heavenly meanings. No, the things of the kingdom *happen* in parables — right before your eyes. And our Lord calls attention to them, so that we may notice . . . and learn, learn spiritually, and thus *know* "that it is near, even at the doors."

You understand the fig tree? You know very well that when its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, then summer is nigh?

Well, then, do not be blind and ignorant. Open your eyes and behold! There is a parable before you every time you see these signs of imminent summer. It, the end of all things, is near! It, the day of the Lord, is even at the doors!

It is not far off, but nigh at hand! It is the next great event of history, of the fulfillment of God's world-plan. There are no more wonders of grace to be accomplished before that last great wonder of the coming of our Lord.

Learn . . . and know . . . and watch . . . and be ready!

\* \* \* \* \*

The end is near, even at the doors!

Our Lord is referring, first of all, to the end of old Jerusalem. Of this He had spoken already in the preceding chapter after He had pronounced woes upon the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. He had said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." The disciples had grasped something of this, but could not conceive of it; and they had come to Jesus and pointed out to Him the buildings of the temple. And then Jesus had responded, "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Thereupon Jesus prophesies destruction and enters into the entire discourse about the last things which precedes this parable.

Thus it is that in this chapter you will find many things which our Lord Jesus said which, while they are true of the final end of all things, are true primarily and typically of the end of earthly Jerusalem. There are also elements in the chapter which certainly are true of the destruction of earthly Jerusalem in A.D. 70 only, as, for example, when the Lord says, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day" (vs. 20). And there are elements in this discourse also which cannot be connected with the latter, but refer to the end of all things only, as, for example, when the Lord speaks of the sun being darkened and the stars falling from heaven, and when He speaks of the "sign of the Son of man" and of seeing "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power

and great glory."

Hence, our Lord is telling His disciples of "current events" which would take place in the lifetime of many of them. The utter destruction of old, earthly Jerusalem would take place. It would become a heap of rubble. And the times would be terrible. They would hear of wars and rumors of wars. Nation would rise against nation. There would be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. Disciples of Christ would be afflicted and killed and hated of all nations for His name's sake. The times would be so terrible that they should flee to the mountains. And he who was on the housetop should not come down to take anything out of his house, neither should he who was in the field turn back to get his clothes. And woe to the pregnant mother and the nursing mother in those days! Dreadful times were coming in the very lifetime of God's people of those days (vss. 6, 7, 17-21).

Moreover, as is clear from the whole context in Matthew 23 and 24, all these things were a matter of divine judgment. There was wrath from God upon old, earthly Jerusalem. She had killed the prophets and stoned them which were sent unto her, and she soon would crucify the Lord of glory. Her time was finished. Jerusalem, center of the old dispensational kingdom of God, and, as such, type of the real, spiritual kingdom and its heavenly Jerusalem, had served its purpose. She had become manifest, especially in her crucifying of the Prince of glory, as the reprobate, ungodly, antichristian church. She is ripe for judgment. There is no more place for her in the scheme of redemption. She must give way and make room for the reality of the spiritual, heavenly kingdom of God and His Christ.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ultimately, however — and this is of more significance to us today — our Lord Jesus is speaking here of the end of all things and of the signs of its nearness.

The end of all things is at hand — at the doors!

The disciples had asked the Lord about this: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" And the Lord had spoken about this, and not only about the destruction of Jerusalem. He had spoken about the destruction and passing away of this present world, of the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds and with power and great glory, and of the final gathering together of the elect from the four winds by His angels. And He had spoken of the signs of that final coming.

The end of all things is prefigured in the end of old Jerusalem. The latter marked with finality the



end of the age of types and shadows, the end of the earthly temple and everything connected with it, the end of the earthly throne of David, the end of the national form of the church — the end which was principally accomplished in the cross and resurrection and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ and in His return in the Spirit. But it was *an* end, not *the* end. And as *an* end, it pointed to *the* end.

Just as Christ comes in judgment over the reprobate old dispensational church in the destruction of Jerusalem when its rejection of Him is fully evident and its measure of iniquity is full, and when its usefulness is over, so He shall come in judgment at the end of all things over the entire reprobate world. Just as in A.D. 70 the kingdom of God becomes revealed in its heavenly, spiritual nature when all the accouterments of the old, typical kingdom are finally done away with, so when He comes in final judgment, He comes unto salvation and the final manifestation of His kingdom in all its heavenly, spiritual glory and perfection and purity. Then all the chaff is destroyed, and His church, elect and redeemed and glorified, stands with Him in all the beauty of holiness. Old things will finally pass away, and all things shall be made new. And Christ shall be revealed in all His heavenly glory, the Lord of lords and King of kings!

\* \* \* \* \*

All the signs of that end are clearly before you!  
Learn the parable!

When you see the fig tree (or any fruit tree, for that matter) budding and putting forth leaves, you know the summer is near.

So likewise, when you see all these things, know that the end of all things is at the doors!

What things?

War and rumors of war, nation rising against nation, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, tribulation and persecution and apostasy, false prophets and false Christs, abounding iniquity, the love of many waxing cold, world-wide gospel preaching, eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage as in the days of Noah — all these things! They are right before your eyes!

And they are signs, sure and infallible signs, that the end of all things, the end of the age, is *at the*

*doors!* Just as sure and infallible as the budding and putting forth leaves of the fig tree are signs of imminent summer!

Moreover, just as when the signs of the fig tree intensify as spring progresses toward summer, so the signs of the end of the age intensify and become more graphic and more urgent when the history of this age progresses toward the end of all things!

Yes, indeed, you can and may ask questions about this nearness in the light of the fact that it is almost two thousand years since our Lord uttered these words to His disciples. You may say, "I can understand that the destruction of earthly Jerusalem was 'at the doors,' but how was this true of the end of all things and the final coming of the Lord?" But do not ask such questions in doubt and unbelief! The questions can be answered, too. It may be pointed out that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It may be pointed out that the Lord comes as quickly as possible and that our God follows a straight course toward the realization of His counsel. It may be pointed out, too, that from the point of view of God's counsel all things have been accomplished, that the kingdom is principally realized, and that the one wonder of grace which remains to be accomplished, the final coming of our Lord to judge the quick and the dead, is the last one!

But for all that, do not be lulled to sleep. Do not be blind. Open your eyes, and behold! All the signs are there, and they are there more intensely than ever before in history!

\* \* \* \* \*

So likewise . . . know!

Know it not as an item of theoretical knowledge which you file away in the storehouse of your memory!

You don't do that with the knowledge that summer is nigh, do you? When you see the budding and greening tree, you prepare for summer.

Know, then, with a living, spiritual knowledge which moves you to prepare and be ready, that the end of all things is at the doors!

Learn . . . and know . . . and watch . . . and be ready!

*The Standard Bearer makes a  
thoughtful gift for the sick & shut-in.*



## EDITORIAL

# Prophecy and Current Events

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

This issue is devoted in its entirety to the theme *Current Events In The Light Of Prophecy*. I may add that it is not, and is not intended to be, an exhaustive treatment of the subject; rather, the planning committee of our staff chose what it thought to be certain key aspects of the general subject and asked various writers to contribute articles. However, the theme presupposes that current events can and may and should indeed be viewed in the light of prophecy by God's people. Implicit in that presupposition, therefore, is the truth that prophecy speaks of and sheds light upon current events, the events taking place in our world and in our time. Otherwise it would hardly be possible to view current events in the light of prophecy. The searchlight of prophecy focuses upon the events of contemporary history.

This raises several questions, some of which we shall consider here.

In the first place, what is prophecy?

A prophet in the Scriptural sense of the word is simply one who declares God's mind and God's will authoritatively, i.e., in the name of God. As such, prophecy may refer to the past and the present as well as to the future. Usually, however, when we think of prophecy, we almost automatically think of it as having reference to future events. It is *predictive*. And it is in this sense also that we are considering prophecy in connection with the theme of this issue. We purpose to look at current events as they have been predicted in prophecy, i.e., current events as they were *future* in Bible prophecy.

In this connection, we should note the following: 1) We must be careful not to consider prophecy as if it were simply history written beforehand. Among other things, this has led to the attempt on the part of some to stipulate the exact point in history at which we stand, and even to predict the day and the hour of Christ's coming. 2) Prophecy is not interested in history in general, but in the realization of the kingdom of God. 3) Prophecy, like all of revelation, really proceeds from the idea that

God's people as being His covenant friends, who share His secrets, are called to know Him, to do His will, and to be His witnesses in the midst of the world. To that end God makes known to His people, His covenant friends, what He has done, what He does, and what He will do. 4) For this reason, too, prophecy often does not deal with events at all, but with principles, the general principles of God's almighty providence and the broad lines of His counsel, but as those principles and those lines all converge in the one grand purpose of the salvation of His people in Christ Jesus.

When we consider prophecy in the predictive sense, therefore, we may say that it is a looking into the future even unto the final realization of all things, to the great day of the Lord, in the searchlight-beam of the special revelation of God's counsel and with a view to the development and culmination of the kingdom of heaven. As such, it pictures the King, the kingdom people, the different phases and stages of development of the kingdom, and the final consummation and perfection of the kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. It is to the latter, in fact, that all prophecy in the deepest sense of the word looks forward and to which it points God's people. The latter must not be forgotten. It is true not only of the prophetic utterances of the New Testament Scriptures, but also of the Old, and that, too, sometimes very explicitly. Just think, for example, of the fact that Isaiah's prophecy speaks of the new heavens and the new earth and speaks very often and explicitly of the final perfection of Zion.

There are many facets of the interpretation of prophecy which could be mentioned, but I wish to call attention in this connection especially to three: 1) Prophecy draws its prophetic picture of the coming of the kingdom of heaven against the background of a description of the world-power and the historical development of all things. Very often and emphatically in prophecy we behold all the powers in heaven and on earth as having their purpose in working for the realization of the kingdom of



Christ. Prophecy pictures all things as serving, willingly or in spite of themselves, Jehovah, His purpose, His Christ, His Zion. 2) The prophets are given to see the future and to speak of it always from the viewpoint of their *historic present*. This must always be kept in mind in interpreting prophecy. Isaiah speaks from the "present" of the time of King Hezekiah, long before the captivity in and return from Babylon. Zechariah speaks from the "present" of the time just after the return from captivity. John speaks in the Book of Revelation from the "present" of approximately one hundred years after the first advent and the "fulness of time." And in this connection, it must be kept in mind that the prophets are given to see more clearly and fully according as the time of realization draws nearer. 3) We must keep in mind the element of prophetic perspective, therefore. Just as it makes a vast difference whether you behold the Rocky Mountains from fifty or a hundred miles away in eastern Colorado or whether you are right among them in Rocky Mountain National Park, so it makes a vast difference in perspective, whether you behold the day of the Lord from the perspective of Isaiah or Joel or whether you behold it from the perspective of our Lord in Matthew 24 or from the perspective of John on Patmos.

Now it is the specific goal of this issue to try to put current events and the historical situation in which we are living, near the end of the twentieth century, in the light of revelation. As I already said, that presupposes that the searchlight of prophecy shines on us and our times. Specifically, the Scriptures speak of the coming of the Lord; and they speak of that coming both in the sense that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming throughout the history of this dispensation, i.e., He is on the way, in the process of coming, and in the sense of His final advent, or parousia. And it is in this connection that the Scriptures in several places point to what are called the precursory signs of Christ's coming. By the precursory signs are meant all those events in the realm of nature, as well as in the history of the nations of the world and of the church which indicate that Jesus is coming and that the end of all things is near and is approaching quickly. And it is easy to understand that it is precisely in connection with these precursory signs that it is possible, as well as necessary and beneficial, to consider current events in the light of prophecy. Not all of these precursory signs will be discussed in this special issue. Nevertheless, we will list those signs, reminding you at the same time that the order in which they are listed is not strictly the order of time, and that most of these signs occur simultaneously throughout this dispensation. The signs are as follows: 1) The preaching of the gospel

to all nations. 2) Wars and rumors of wars. 3) Social conflict and revolutions. 4) Death, famines, pestilences, earthquakes. 5) Apostasy. 6) The development and consummation of Antichrist. 7) Great tribulation. 8) Signs in the heavens. 9) The sign of the Son of Man.

\* \* \* \* \*

All of the preceding leads us to a brief discussion of the subject of the Millennium and of two errant and very dangerous views concerning it. For presupposed in what we stated above is an amillennial view of the coming of Christ and the end of all things. The two errant views in this connection are the postmillennial and premillennial views. It is certainly not my purpose in this brief space to discuss these views in any detail: that would be impossible. However, because of the prevalence of the two errant views mentioned, the Reformed believer should be thoroughly acquainted with them and with their dangerous errors. (I may mention in this connection that there is ample literature on the subject of millennial views among our Protestant Reformed publications, in pamphlets and in books.) Here I merely mention the various views and briefly point to the errors of pre- and postmillennialism.

The term *millennium* is derived from Revelation 20, which speaks of Satan's being bound a thousand years. The term has come to be used to refer to a period of a thousand years which is supposed to be characterized by a special dispensation of prosperity and bliss for the church on earth.

As the very name indicates, postmillennialism holds that the coming of Christ will take place *after* the millennium. Before the coming of Christ there will be a special dispensation of gospel preaching and a general conversion of mankind, so that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth. Upon the scene of this realized kingdom of God on earth Christ will come. In connection with the postmillennial view, we point out: 1) That it is simply a denial and ignoring of Scripture's testimony concerning the precursory signs. 2) That Scripture does not support the idea of world-conversion and of a reign of righteousness and peace for the church on earth, prior to Christ's coming. 3) That Scripture pictures Christ's coming as catastrophic, not as a matter of gradual development into the age of the kingdom of glory.

Premillennialism holds that the coming of Christ is *before* the millennium. This erroneous view distinguishes Christ's coming into the rapture and the revelation. The rapture can come at any time and is not preceded by signs. It involves the taking up to Christ in the air of the then-living saints who expect His coming and the first resurrection, i.e., the resurrection to glory of the saints who have died



before the rapture. Seven years later Christ will come in the "revelation" and will then reign in earthly Jerusalem over His kingdom-people (Israel) and His church together; this will be for a period of a thousand years. During the seven-year period the reign of Antichrist and the great tribulation take place. During the thousand years Satan is bound. Then the devil will be loosed, and Gog and Magog will come against the Holy City. But Christ will consume them, the resurrection of the wicked will take place, and judgment over all nations will be executed. Following this, the eternal state will ensue (according to some, with the church in heaven and the kingdom-people, Israel, on the new earth). Many, many objections may be registered against this view. Let me mention four: 1) It separates between Israel and the church. 2) Its view of two or more resurrections denies Scripture's teaching that the resurrection of the wicked and the righteous take place at the same time, John 5:28, 29. 3) Scripture does not teach a rapture, nor a millennium, but everlasting glory for the saints after the resurrection of the body. 4) Practically speaking, the view is

dangerous because it teaches that God's people will escape the tribulation.

The amillennial and only Scriptural interpretation holds that the coming of Christ is without a literal millennium of any kind. The present age is the last hour; following it is the eternal state of the kingdom of glory. The events toward the end of this age shall be as follows: 1) The measure of iniquity shall be filled by the ungodly world. 2) There shall be great apostasy from the church. 3) The Antichrist shall culminate and realize his kingdom for a time. This will mean great tribulation for the faithful. 4) The coming of Christ shall terminate all. 5) The general resurrection of the dead shall take place, followed by the final judgment of the wicked and the righteous. 6) The everlasting kingdom of glory in the new creation shall follow.

It is only in an amillennial context, in conclusion, that a discussion of current events in the light of prophecy and of the precursory signs makes any Scriptural sense.

## War as a Sign of Christ's Coming

*Prof. H. Hanko*

The Scriptures are very clear that one of the signs of Christ's coming is the prevalence of war in this world. Jesus emphatically states this in Matthew 24. Puzzled and perturbed by Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the temple, the disciples asked Jesus, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (vs. 3). Among the many signs of which Jesus spoke, He mentioned also this sign: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (vs. 6).

It is interesting to note in connection with this sign that Jesus not only emphatically asserts that

wars shall be a sign of His coming, but that also when these wars take place, "the end is not yet," and "these things are the beginning of sorrows." In other words, wars surely speak of the Lord's coming, but they shall not continue until the very end of time; there shall be a period when wars cease.

When the book of Revelation introduces its main theme of the signs of Christ's coming (a theme developed in the opening of the seals, the blowing of the trumpets and the pouring out of the vials), it speaks of four horses, one of which is a red horse, concerning which we read: "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Revelation 6:4). It is clear from the description of this horse, that the symbolic reference is to war and its destructive



power. It is very clear, therefore, that among all the signs of Christ's coming, war is one of them. The wars which have plagued this earth throughout the history of the world, and especially in the New Dispensation point to the fact that Christ is coming again.

It is of no little importance to understand that the many events in the history of the world and of the church which are signs of Christ's coming can be signs only because they are sovereignly controlled and directed by Christ Himself. It is absurd to think of these signs as events which take place outside of Christ's rule, independent of His power, but which simply happen to serve as signs. The same is true of war. Wars can only be signs because Christ, in His position of universal rule and authority, so controls and directs the affairs of men and nations that wars take place. Christ sends wars.

This truth is further evident from the historical origin of war. Prior to the attempt to build the tower of Babel, we do not read of wars. But from Babel till today wars have been common in the world. There is good historical reason for this. Babel was an early (the very first) attempt on the part of the world of sin to establish the one universal kingdom of Antichrist. A one world kingdom in which all men would live in peace and harmony was the dream of these early builders. But God would not permit sinful man to realize his dreams at this early date; the efforts to establish such a kingdom would make the realization of God's purpose impossible. That is, if this kingdom of Antichrist was so soon built, wickedness would prevail in the earth to such an extent that the church could no longer live — for Antichrist is the implacable enemy of the church. And so God confused the speech of men; and by confusing their speech, He divided the people of the earth into nations and races. This division has the consequence of making a one world kingdom temporarily impossible. The nations are so divided, so different from each other, so uniquely dissimilar, so unlike each other in racial and national distinctives, that they cannot get along with each other. Each nation seeks itself, its own aggrandizement, its own prerogatives, its own welfare, its own place among the nations — a place of superiority if at all possible. The French do not want to be English — not even in Canada; they want to stay French at all costs. Add to this the sinful hatred of man and the result is war. And war makes the premature realization of the Antichrist an impossibility, for while the nations of the world are at each other's throats in incessant warfare, God accomplishes His purpose in the salvation of His church. War is a sort of restraint of sin; i.e., even though war itself is rooted in sin, is an expression of sin — hatred, envy, desire to dominate,

murder, etc., it is also a restraint of the greater sin of the establishment of Antichrist's kingdom when all the energies of the world will be single-mindedly directed to the establishment of a kingdom of Satan in which the church has been eliminated.

The world bends every effort to bring about peace on earth. We need only remind ourselves of the League of Nations, formed after World War I, which was a sure guarantee of peace. The leaders boasted that, with the formation of the League, the last war had been fought. How utterly foolish. Within a few decades a more terrible war yet encompassed the globe, World War II. After this war, the United Nations was formed as an international forum in which all the nations of the earth could resolve their differences and disputes by discussion and peaceful compromise rather than to resort to warfare. World War II ended in 1945. Has the United Nations shown any ability to bring peace to this sorry world?

I read somewhere not so long ago that, at the present moment, there were 35 wars going on in the world. I cannot list them all, but one need only think of the war in Afghanistan, of the war between Iran and Iraq, of the fighting of Ethiopia and Chad, of the constant warfare in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras. The world has not even come close to establishing peace on earth. The loud boasts of the world's leaders that peace shall surely come are drowned by the roar of artillery, the groans of the bleeding and dying, the hoarse shouts of infantry advancing under a hail of bullets.

The Scriptures tell us, however, that the dreams of the world shall indeed be realized. There shall come a period of time when the scheme of Babel will be attained. Jesus tells us that the sign of wars and rumors of wars means that the end is not yet; they are the beginning of sorrows. This dream of man shall be realized only when Antichrist succeeds in establishing his universal kingdom. Then it will appear as if Christ is indeed banished from the earth, His kingdom is utterly defeated, and the church of our Lord and Savior is destroyed. But that will be just before the end, and the Lord will soon appear.

But we live in a different kind of a day. Although there are many wars being fought even while I sit here and write, the threat of nuclear war hangs over the heads of men. Especially the USSR and the US are engaged in a terrible arms race in which billions of dollars are spent each year to increase and perfect mighty engines of destruction which could, if fired, turn this world into a holocaust and destroy all of civilization as we now know it. It is not difficult to understand why this is of great concern to the leaders of the world, and why, especial-



ly today, men long for peace. According to those who are supposed to know, nuclear war can only mean total destruction of mankind and civilization. Such horrors are almost too great to contemplate.

The Christian lives in this present world for a time, until the Lord takes him to glory. When wars rage, affecting his own life too, he sees that the Scriptures are being fulfilled with remarkable accuracy, and he contemplates the fact that Christ is coming again. War brings its sufferings on him as well. In the US the consequences of war have been limited to the need for our sons to march into battle; but elsewhere God's people have seen their homes destroyed, their land ravaged, their lives unalterably changed. Yet through it all, the Christian keeps his eyes focused upon the one truth that all these things must come to pass, for it is in this way that the Lord has determined to bring the history of the world to its conclusion.

But what about nuclear war? Will a full-blown nuclear war be fought before the kingdom of Antichrist is established?

One would think, from the information which Scripture gives us, that this is not possible. There are many other signs given in Scripture which also point to the return of the Lord; and if we take all these signs together, we cannot help but be impressed with the fact that we live very near to the end of time. The signs are unmistakable in that respect. How long the Lord will tarry we cannot say; but that it cannot be so very long any more is a fact.

Yet nuclear war, with its terrible destruction, would almost indefinitely postpone the return of the Lord. If nuclear war truly means universal destruction of civilization (even if 1/3 or less of men would survive), the events which Scripture describes as having to take place before the Lord comes back are of such a kind that it would take hundreds, if not thousands, of years for these things to happen once again. We need only think of the kingdom which Antichrist establishes. According to Scripture, especially in Revelation 13, this kingdom will be one of great prosperity and scientific achievement. It will be unsurpassed in wealth and material plenty. It will be a kingdom of untold beauty and greatness in which all the world will wonder after the beast, even while it is a kingdom of great sin. While events in our day surely point to the possibility of that kingdom being soon established, a nuclear war would make such a kingdom a very distant event. It appears as if the Lord's purpose is not to unleash the furies of nuclear-armed missiles and the resulting destruction. At least, if people start building bomb shelters, I have no intention of making that kind of investment.

But what must be the attitude of believers in the light of these things?

This question takes on pertinency because almost the whole church-world of our day is involved in a kind of pacifist movement which condemns nuclear war, the arms race, and the efforts to increase the nuclear arsenals of the world. We cite here a few evidences from several decisions taken by the Christian Reformed Church's Synod in recent years.

Although the Christian Reformed Church has had a lot to say over the years concerning war and the Christian's relation to it, recently a number of guidelines were adopted on the question of "War, Pacifism and Amnesty." In these guidelines one reads: "All wars are the result of sin, and though God may use wars in his judgment on nations, *it is his purpose to make wars to cease.*" (Underscoring ours). In 1982 the Synod adopted "Guidelines For Justifiable Warfare." Among other things the Synod made the following pronouncements:

*The Christian church in articulating the ideal of peace proclaimed by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, may not so construe that ideal as to deprive the state in principle of the sword given to it for the defense of order and freedom . . . (Underscoring ours).*

In the Christian view the ultimate purpose of a just war is the establishment of a lasting peace upon the foundation of justice. Its final end is the achievement of a righteous and stable political order within which concrete human values are preserved and a well-ordered human society can flourish.

No war may be considered just which, while visiting destruction upon all that is bad, destroys every living human witness to that which is good; no war can be considered an allowable remedy for evil which destroys, together with this evil, all or almost all of history's accumulated goods; no war can be considered a fit political instrument for the establishment of peace which brings no peace but the peace of death.

Although a just war is in principle thinkable, and in the past was concretely possible, it is at least questionable whether, in view of the destructive power of modern weapons, it can any longer become actual. Any war which would scorch the earth, destroy all or the major part of the technical, cultural, and spiritual treasures of mankind,



and annihilate the human race, or leave alive only a maimed and wounded fragment of it, lies outside the traditional concept of a just war and must be judged morally impermissible.

The Christian Reformed Church has also adopted in 1983 a new "Confession" called, "Our World Belongs to God, A Contemporary Testimony." In this rather frivolous document, we find the following:

We deplore the waste of the arms race and the horrors that we risk; we call on all nations to work towards disarmament, pledging ourselves to walk in ways of peace. For this world belongs to God; we look to him for help, so that all may be made new.

If one reads carefully the quotes above and the documents in which they appear, it is interesting that there are several assumptions which are made which are incompatible with Scripture and the Christian faith.

The basic assumption is that the peace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ shall be attained in this present world. This can only mean that the kingdom of Christ, which has as one of its chief characteristics peace, will be established here below in some sort of post-millennial sense of the word. And this in turn implies that this kingdom will embrace all men in a sort of universal brotherhood in which the whole human race enjoys citizenship in Christ's kingdom.

These ideas are contrary to Scripture, although they form the basis for these pronouncements on war. It is after this illusory and Scripture-denying dream that much of today's church chases. The believer must not be deceived. He does not look for the kingdom in this world, but only in the new heavens and the new earth in which Christ shall be all in all. So when wars and rumors of wars surround him and nation rises up against nation, he lifts up his head, for his redemption draws near.

## Christ's Coming Foreshadowed in Creation

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Without signs it would be very difficult for us in this complex life, which is ours today. Signs give us valuable information, help us find our way, keep us from getting lost, prevent us from suffering injury, and assure and comfort us in many ways.

Signs are also valuable in our spiritual life; and for them we may be thankful. The sacraments are holy signs which the God of our salvation uses for the strengthening of our faith, and for our comfort in this vale of tears and sorrows. But there are other signs which the Lord our God gives us to assure us of the return of our Saviour, and of the end of this present world. They not only remind us of the sure coming of Christ, but they also comfort us with the testimony that the day is certainly coming, when we, with body and soul, shall enter into a world where righteousness and holiness will be ours

forever, and where we will be completely free from the curse.

One of the richest passages in Holy Writ that present to us these signs of that coming of Christ, and of the end of this world, is Matthew 24. There Jesus gives us signs in answer to the question of His disciples as to "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" These signs that Jesus gives us fall into three categories. There are happenings that take place in the history of mankind. There are the events that occur in the church, as she fights the good fight of faith here below. And there are those signs that are manifest in the creation wherein we live, and whereby we are encircled.

At the moment we are considering those signs in



creation round about us. They may be found in Matthew 24:7, and they are famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places. There will, however, be more intense, more spectacular signs shortly before Christ returns. These are listed in verse 29. The sun will be darkened to such a degree that the moon will not be able to reflect any of its light. Stars shall begin to fall out of their courses, and parts of some of them may fall down to the earth.

We do well to consider that all these unusual events are expressions of God's holy wrath against sin. They are unusual in that they were not in existence before man fell into sin. They are various aspects of the curse, which came upon this earth after man rebelled against God, and tried to dethrone Him, by trying to become His equal — as Satan devilishly suggested. From that moment onward God began to show man by the curse that He is God, and that He is a holy God, Who will visit all iniquity, even as He had said to Adam, that in the day he disobeyed and went against God's will, he would die.

These signs of famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places deny the presence of the so-called common grace. And they must not be thought of as interruptions of that "common grace." They are clear and loudly-proclaimed testimonies of the unchangeable God, that rain and sunshine are not gifts of a "common grace," but that instead they can be visitations of His wrath upon those whose sins were not blotted out by the blood of His Son. It is intense sunshine that causes famines and burns up crops. It is an overabundance of rain that causes floods and brings pestilences. Grace is a blessing. Too much grace does not become a curse. Too much rain can become such, and so can too much sunshine. But man can never get too much of God's grace. And as these famines and pestilences become more widespread and intense, as we approach the end of time, God's grace is not getting thinner and less common.

Does not Psalm 136 tell us 26 times that God's mercy endureth forever? And does it not state this while telling us that in His wrath He visited with death Pharaoh and his host, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan? Upon them there was no mercy and "common grace." And does not God Himself declare in Psalm 5:5 that He hates ALL workers of iniquity? Still more, in Psalm 7:11 He teaches us that He is angry with the wicked every day. Yes, EVERY day, if you please.

On the other hand, these famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places are signs to those who, in God's sovereign grace, belong to Christ, that He remembers them, will visit their enemies,

is preparing the way for His Son to return when His church shall be delivered fully and everlastingly from the wicked world. And God's people, as they also suffer in such famines, pestilences, and earthquakes can in their miseries and losses find comfort and hope. Yea, such calamities are a blessing to them, because as the psalmist states it in Psalm 119:71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn Thy statutes." And indeed, "all things work together for good to those that love God" (Romans 8:28). Grace does not consist in things, but in God's reason and attitude in giving us what we receive from His hand.

These visitations of God's wrath, namely, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, are for the good of the children of God, and are signs, not simply of God's holy wrath against sin, but also of His grace toward His people in Christ. For they are His speech to His church that He, in covenant faithfulness, is preparing the way for Christ to return, and in Him to bring forth a new creation that is without sin and the curse. This is especially clear in the earthquakes, which speak of the passing away of things as we now know them. Yes, earthquakes tell us that we surely are on the way to a world wherein there will be no famines or pestilences. And even beyond that, what grace would it be for God to favor the enemies of His church with wealth and health, that would enable them more completely to molest and persecute His church? Grace does not oppose grace.

What we must understand and keep in mind, as we look at these signs of Christ's coming, is that Jesus in Matthew 24:7 gives us broad classifications. To these famines belong that which causes them, such as drought and crop failures. Recently we had some unusual and devastating cold blasts into the deep southern part of our country. Citrus fruits and growing vegetables were destroyed. Elsewhere in our country water shortages are looming as more and more of a threat to agriculture. The water table is sinking deeper and deeper below the surface of the earth. Serious consideration is being given to diverting water from the Great Lakes. This will in turn cause the water situation in the cities and states that border these huge bodies of fresh water to become more critical.

Then there are the diseases that belong to the pestilences. To mind comes the acid rain that is destroying vegetation and forests, and is polluting our drinking water. Do not overlook the miseries and diseases that man brings upon himself. There are the toxic wastes which our forefathers knew nothing of, and came about as man strives to get away from the curse in the way of "labor saving" devices, and by means of industry making life more



pleasant for himself apart from God.

Man has made tremendous advances in the medical field; and the pharmaceutical companies do a tremendous business. But the hospitals are not big enough to care for all the sick and afflicted. Many diseases are no longer the threat to multitudes that they were. Institutions for diseases as tuberculosis give way to psychopathic hospitals, with many more patients and vast sprawling buildings; because although it seems as though man has defeated to a great extent one disease, God confronts him with new evidences of His wrath against mankind whose sins have not been paid for by His Son's cross. By means of shots, such diseases as polio do not threaten our children as they did some decades ago, but new diseases trouble them. God is not mocked. Man does not and cannot escape from the curse. It is not weakening, even though here in our country at least, the span of life for man is a few years longer than in the past. Instead, as we come closer to the end of time, and the return of Christ, these forms of the curse will increase in intensity and in agonizing forms.

Earthquakes in diverse places do not necessarily mean that there will be more earthquakes. Diverse places means that they will be experienced in different parts of the earth, not simply where scientists predict them, because they discovered fault lines, but in unexpected places. And who can deny that there have been earthquakes all over our globe? Keep track of them for a year. On your calendar, on the day it takes place, write the location of the earthquake reported. After the year is over, and you refer to the list, you will be surprised at the diverse places where these earthquakes occur now already. Yes, the whole earth is going to pass away, as far as its present form is concerned. A new heaven and a new earth are coming in the relatively near future. God speaks in these earthquakes together with the famines and pestilences. The question is whether we listen to Him.

These more devastating signs shortly before Christ's return are presented in Revelation 8: hail; fire mingled with blood burning up trees and grass; a mountain of fire that is cast into the sea killing one third of the creatures and destroying ships; a great star, burning as a lamp, falls into the rivers, causing men to die of the bitter water that results; a

third part of the sun is smitten, the moon and stars are darkened, not shining for the third part of the day.

We are not yet in those days. But the famine today in Africa is certainly one in which more than the usual number of deaths occur. Acid rain is destroying our water; toxic wastes are killing men. We are definitely nearing those days when the signs in creation become more forceful.

One thing to remember, as already hinted, is that God gives these signs to His church in His grace. They are foretastes of the coming judgment, and are manifestations of His holy wrath. But for that very reason they are signs to His church that all His promises are being fulfilled, and that He is working all things together for good to those that love Him. In fact the increased intensity of these calamities against the wicked, unbelieving world, underscores His love for and grace unto His church.

As sin develops, God manifests more clearly His hatred of sinners. But the chief reason why He intensifies these signs is to speak more clearly and powerfully to His church. You see, we cannot divorce these signs from those that take place in the history of mankind, and in the history of His church. The Antichrist will appear; and the church will be persecuted. The man of sin will perform such amazing deeds that, if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived by what the Antichrist is able to do in the wonders he can and will perform. In those days the church will need to see and hear more clearly the signs that God gives for her sake.

God will speak more loudly, so that His people can hear over the loud noise of the antichristian boasts of that day. He will show to His people more brightly, in the darkness of those awful days of the deepest forms of apostasy and wickedness, that this world has ever seen, that He keeps His word. And though the seed of the woman has its heel bruised, the head of the serpent and of his seed is going to be crushed. In days when you could expect the believers to faint and tremble with fear, He will speak more loudly in creation to give them good cheer. Yes, these signs in creation, even though in them the saints suffer physically along with the wicked, will encourage them and keep them looking for Christ.

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# The Second Beast

*Rev. G. Van Baren*

In Revelation 13:11-18 we read of a second beast which arises out of the earth. A first beast (vs. 1-10) came forth from the restless sea. He represented the development of the antichristian world power, and the antichrist who controls this. That first beast comes from the unstable waters — representing the restless nations of the world — and establishes a measure of stability and order among men. This first beast makes possible the rise of the second one.

We read of that second beast: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon . . . . And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

This second beast represents the antichristian world power of the end-time from the viewpoint of its scientific and religious development. Out of the relative stability of nations, develops science and philosophy to its fullest extent. The second beast is not of terrible appearance: he is seen as a lamb (an imitation, too, of the Lamb of God). He speaks with the voice of the dragon. That he speaks, reminds of his persuasive powers — for he convinces many of his authority and wisdom.

This second beast makes an image of the beast and gives life to that image. The beast demands that all worship this image.

It is this Word of God which is being fulfilled, I am convinced, in our own day. One sees in fact what is repeatedly called the knowledge explosion.

The sum-total of man's knowledge today is vastly greater than ever before in the history of mankind.

One reads some interesting facts concerning this "knowledge explosion." We are told that more than 90% of the scientists of all ages are living today. We are reminded of one man, in the early part of this decade, who quit working at the U.S. patent office with the claim that everything that could be invented, now was — and how wrong he proved to be!

Knowledge is not simply increasing at a constant rate, but there is a doubling of the sum of knowledge in a constantly decreasing period of time. This rapid increase must cause us to wonder how far this all can go. One can assume that also with respect to knowledge, God had determined that there shall be a full measure. Man shall develop as far as it is possible for him before the end shall come.

We are reminded of the rapid changes which have taken place within our own generation. There are readers of this periodical who can tell of the time they saw their first automobile or first airplane. Some recall well the first appearance of the radio; and (does this mark me as ancient?) I myself recall the dawn of the television age while I was still in high school.

The present generation has suddenly become aware of the computer. What, a few years ago, required millions of dollars and vast areas of space for a computer, now can be done on a small instrument which can be purchased by the ordinary man. Someone has claimed that if the price of the Rolls-Royce had declined in the same proportion as has the computer, it could be purchased today for a nickel.

There is also the application of computer science. Who has not encountered the bar-code and bar-code reader? Large grocery stores use these in their checkout lanes. The use of the computer is seen everywhere.

And consider the effort of man to conquer space. His space shuttles are going constantly up and around the world. Satellites are circling the earth, performing a multitude of tasks: from taking pictures of the weather conditions on the earth to spy-



ing upon installations of other nations.

Nor is the end of such development in sight. With the use of computers, man can store and quickly retrieve a large store of knowledge. He can use this artificial intelligence in order to arrive at ever more knowledge. No longer are we even surprised at the announcements of new discoveries and greater inventions.

But what does all of this mean? One can not, surely, condemn out-of-hand all the inventions of man. It can be even maintained that the inventions of our own day have been used by the church in wonderful ways. Think of the message of the gospel which can now be broadcast over the airwaves to all the nations in the whole earth. The invention of the transistor radio, which is sold for a pittance, makes the hearing of this message possible by even the poorest of the peoples of the earth. While in earlier ages one man could address only a few hundred at a time, today it is possible to address millions at the same time over all of the earth!

Computers are being used by churches and ministers. These make writing and record-keeping much easier. Printing of literature and distribution of the same are also made simpler through the marvelous inventions of our time.

However, one can see how the antichrist can use these same inventions to establish and promote his kingdom. By means of the computer, he can keep track of every man, recording all information on each. He can know where each works, where one goes to church, how much money he earns, what he pays in taxes. By means of a number, the social security number today, the government can record an unbelievably great store of information already. The time may soon come when all information of every individual is kept on one large file.

The inventions already in existence can be used so that by number one can buy and sell. Cash will become almost useless. One can have, soon, his bills paid through the computer. Automatically, the price of that which is purchased will be deducted from one's bank account. Very literally, one will be able to buy and sell only with the number assigned to him.

We can see, then, how the antichrist will be able to assign "numbers" to those only who are willing to deny Christ and worship the image of the beast. Without one's "number," there will be no buying nor selling.

Revelation 13 points out the many other wonders which the second beast performs. He will be able to call fire down from heaven. The Rev. H. Hoeksema, in his book, *Behold He Cometh*, writes of the fact that man can make use of electricity to do this

today. We might recall also the flaming re-entry of the space shuttle. How men admire this wonder performed by the scientists! Clearly, the second beast is coming to prominence. He speaks persuasively and gains the admiration of many because of his wonderful acts.

It is all of this which clearly indicates the nearness of the end of time. I would even dare say that especially this sort of inventiveness of man shows that soon Christ shall return.

There are many signs of the end of time. Christ spake of wars and rumors of wars. He spake of earthquake and pestilence. He warned against apostasy. All these are the "beginning of sorrows." Some have claimed that these signs are always present. One hears of wars through all of history. Disasters in creation have taken place through all the ages. So why consider these as signs of the end? These signs, of course, are but the beginning of the "birthpangs." They become more prevalent and we become more aware of them as the end approaches.

But the sign of final development of the antichrist, the rise of the second beast, is especially an indication of the closeness of the end. Man invented from the time shortly after the fall of Adam. There were inventions of articles of brass and of musical instruments by the children of Cain. There was the invention of the wheel, of guns and gunpowder. There was the invention of the printing press. But never has the inventiveness of man so flourished as at our own day. Indeed, those of years ago thought too that the end must be near. Those too pointed to the inventions of their day. But the rapidity of change, the wonderful inventions, the things which have taken place in our generation — all represent something the like of which has never been before. Nor can this pace of development continue for hundreds of years yet. The accelerating development of knowledge means that the point soon comes when man has developed to his fullest extent on this earth. He will have attained to those things necessary to establish the kingdom of the antichrist.

What does all this mean for us? We must take care lest we too be influenced by the "speech" of the second beast. He is persuasive, convincing. Consider what he declares about such a thing as "evolution." Most men simply believe his claims despite their absurdity. We may not be influenced by all of this. The church is to use, but not abuse, the good things of this earth and the inventions which can be of benefit to it.

What we see and hear ought to cause us the more to watch — for the coming of the Lord is at hand. We are to be on guard lest we succumb to the temp-



tations of this world. We are to anticipate the glories of the heavenly which transcend all that

which can be found on this earth. Watch and pray that our Lord may come quickly.

## Cults — Sign of Christ's Coming

*Rev. Robert C. Harbach*

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . . And there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:11, 24). Our Lord Jesus Himself prophesied of the cult explosion now occurring in the proliferation both of world-religions and the major and minor cults. In this article we are interested in what the Bible has to say of this dark side of apostasy; and since the Bible, in general, may be divided thus — prophecy (the Old Testament), fact (the Gospels), and interpretation of fact (the Epistles), we present the above theme from the point of view of the following divisions: I. The Coming Prophesied, II. The Apostasy Current, and III. The Cults Flourishing.

I. The Coming Prophesied. We refer, of course, to Christ's coming. As many people do, we sometimes call it "the second coming," which, however, Scripture never does. Scripture usually calls it simply "the coming." The disciples had asked, "Tell us . . . what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (24:3). The range of the immediate context takes in (1) the destruction of Jerusalem, (2) the coming again of Christ, and (3) the end (cp. I Cor. 15:24a). The question was, "What shall be the *sign* of Thy coming?" Jesus had gotten around to answering this question in 24:30, the sign being the sign of the second advent and of the consummation of the age. There we read, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory!" "Then shall appear . . ." that is, according to the preceding verse, "immediately after the tribulation of those days," the period mentioned in verses 4-14, and which extends through verses 29-31. So that according to verse 29, the last event before the Advent is "the tribulation of those

days," and not a millennium. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." This we take to be a subjective genitive, so that the meaning is, the sign which He *Himself* is. He is revealed actually in His parousia. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven" (I Thess. 4:16). The objective genitive would mean the sign which points to Him as coming, something like a glowing UFO floating in space for a while, after which the Son of man Himself shall appear. But the first part of the verse, "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven," is explained by the second part, "they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven . . ." So that what this sign is is the Son of man actually *seen*, appearing, in heaven and coming to earth with power and great glory. Then this and the next verse (vv. 30-31), "and He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet" to "gather together His elect," are fulfilled in verses 40-41, "then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, the other left . . ." and this must be understood in the light of I Thess. 4:14-17. Those "taken" (vs. 40-41) are the elect (cp. v. 31; see also Jn. 14:3). Those left are left destitute of God's help. This will include the false prophets, the false messiahs of the cults and their followers who would sway us with their claim, "Lo, here is Christ! or, There!" (v. 23), a claim, which for example, is loudly and incessantly made by the New Age Movement. Therefore, be not deceived, but be also ever ready (durative present tense); "for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh" (v. 44).

II. The Apostasy Current. The apostasy (or falling away from the true church and the true gospel) is prophesied in the prediction of the coming upon the scene of counterfeit prophets, pseudo-messiahs, cult leaders, and cult movements. Paul prophesied of this apostasy in I Timothy 4:1 when he warned, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly (the source of



the prophecy is then divine and divinely inspired), that in the latter times (notice: no date is given), some *shall* (it's future to Paul) depart (apostatize) from the faith (the whole system of Christian truth — creeds and confessions), giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (demons). The latest useful books today exposing the cults show their direct connection to and permeation with the occult. Of this very thing Paul had prophesied. He further prophesied, in II Timothy 3:1ff, "that in the last days perilous times *shall* come. For men *shall* be" self-lovers, money-lovers . . . no lovers of good (v. 3), pleasure-lovers, not God-lovers (v. 4). Paul, in his gift of prophecy, saw these things off into the not distant future. Peter also prophesied of this coming apostasy in II Peter 2:1-3, "there *were* false prophets among the people, even as there *shall* be false teachers among you, who privily (secretly) *shall* bring in damnable heresies . . . and many *shall* follow their pernicious ways . . . and through covetousness *shall* with feigned words make merchandise of you." The cult leaders are in it for money; their dupes make them rich and they live like kings! But then this apostasy, prophesied by Jesus, Paul, and Peter, soon actually occurred in Jude's day. For he said, there *are* certain men crept in unawares, who, although they were ordained to this evil work resulting in their condemnation, are actually "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," and are actually now "denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). "These defile the flesh, despise . . . speak evil" (present tenses, v. 8, 10). "These *are* spots in your feasts . . . feeding themselves without fear . . . foaming out their own shame . . . These *are* murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth *speaketh* great swelling words" (v. 12, 13, 16). The present tenses here show that already in Jude's day the apostasy prophesied had come. Since then there was and continues to be an ongoing apostasy, both in the churches and in the world of the ungodly (II Pet. 2:5). "But, Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they *told* you there should be (there shall be) mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (Jude 17, 18). It was Peter who prophetically recorded the actual words that these apostates would speak (See II Pet. 3). Jude reminds us that the apostles had identified these apostates as *mockers*. That's exactly what those of the major and minor cults today are, mockers! That means that the leaders and followers of the "Children of God" cult, of "Christian Science," of Mormonism and of Armstrongism, are *mockers*. They mock the one only true God. They mock sex, sin, sickness, and death. They mock the true saints,

from Adam on. They mock the Bible, the true Gospel, and the entire, historic, orthodox, Reformed Faith. They mock with their UFO scenarios, their E.T. fantasies, with their drug addiction, with their ritual sex and ritual murder. Their reincarnation tales are mockery of the biblical account of life, death, and the eternal state. Their ESP, dreams of other fantastical worlds and of life on other planets are mockery of divine revelation and of biblical eschatology. Their resorting to hypnotism is a toying with man's God-given mind and conscience and a mocking intrusion into the privacy of a man's soul.

It is Jude, then, who makes it plain that the apostasy is current. Paul tells us that the coming of the Lord, the day of Christ, "shall not come, except there be a falling away (lit., the apostasy) first" (II Thess. 1:10; 2:3). Well, the apostasy has come, we are in it, and it is all a loud warning, as plain as can be, that *it* (the end of the world, Matt. 24:3, 33, in the Kingdom of Glory, Lk. 21:31) is near! The false cults, in many ways, advertise their presence in the world. But their very apostate existence is God's advertisement to all that the coming of the Son of man is near.

III. The Cults Flourishing. True, some weird cults, like the Shakers, are dying out. But at the same time, other new cults are arising. One of the fastest expanding cult bodies is the "New Age Movement" (the ancient "New Thought" decked out in Century Twenty-One format). This is said to embrace worldwide, international networks involving tens of thousands of different organizations, with representation in the United Nations, in prominent business, scientific, legal, and medical circles and in congressional and cabinet levels of the United States government. This cult, and scores of others, has a Hindu background and connection. The cult disease is spreading. In it, we must not overlook, as some contemporaneous books on the subject do, esoteric Illuminism, Satanism, and the latest manifestations of Satanism in "Rock Music" and "M-TV." The latter two, full of the vilest, most horrible abominations, are part of the cult invasion. Does it not overflow into our homes? And are our young parents and young people entirely free of it?

All the cults are part of the wiles and allurements of the Great Whore, or Antichrist's world-kingdom from the point of view of its devilish seductiveness. The end of this kingdom of the cults is pronounced in Revelation 18:1-8, which, please read. God's answer to all these evils in the world is the promise of the Return of the Lord at the last trumpet on the last day, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire



taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (II Thess. 1:7-10).

Whether contemporaneous false prophets be of Astrology, Bahaim, Christian Science, Divine Light Mission, Eckankar, Freemasonry, Gurdjieff/Subud/Renaissance, Hinduism, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, Krishnamurti Foundation, Lifespring,

Mind Sciences, Nichiren Shoshu/Soka Gokkai, Order of the Star of the East, Penitentes, Rosicrucianism, Spiritism, TM, Unification Church, Vedanta Society, Worldwide Church of God, Yoga or Zen, it makes no difference, the damnatory sentence of the one only true God denounced against them all is, "If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of My people, Israel" (Ezek. 14:9).

## Unequally Yoked

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

That we are living in the last times is a plain fact. Every sincere Christian knows that soon his Lord will appear to make all things new. Before the Lord's coming Antichrist must appear. During his brief reign the remnant according to God's gracious election in Christ will suffer in what Scripture calls the Great Tribulation. While it remains true that no man knows the day nor the hour of the Lord's return, we do know that it is very near. Scripture itself states, "But the end of all things is at hand . . ." (I Peter 4:7a). Literally the text says, "But the end (goal, purposeful end) of all things has come near or has made its approach." The end is not coming nor even coming rapidly, but it has already made its approach. For this reason God's people are exhorted to be ". . . sober, and watch unto prayer" (I Peter 4:7b). That we are very near to the end is evident from the fact too that most of the signs of which Jesus spoke (cf. Matthew 24) have occurred and are occurring with increasing rapidity and intensity in our times. There are wars and rumors of war, earthquake and famine and pestilence in many parts of the world. There is abounding lawlessness. Crime of every sort abounds, international terrorism has become a major problem. There is apostasy and falling away in many churches. There are many false prophets and teachers and false Christs. When we see these things we must know that it will not be long before we see the world and nominal church united under the rule of him whose number is six hundred sixty-six.

That we are very near to the end is obvious from events in the world itself. Modern means of transportation and communication developed in the last fifty years or so have made a much smaller world than our fathers knew. The parents of those of us who are in our forties and fifties lived in horse and buggy days. Today within seconds one can talk via the telephone with someone on the other side of the world. A person can fly to the other side of the world within a day. Man has set foot on the moon and dreams of doing more. The advances in medicine and technology are staggering. And all of this serves to unite the countries of the world and make them increasingly interdependent. We live in the day of a "world economy." What happens on Wall Street in New York affects the whole world and not just our own country. More and more there is political unity. The world is divided into the Eastern, Communist countries and the Western, capitalist countries. Both are vying for control of the Third World countries and underdeveloped nations. The threat and terror of nuclear war drives the world powers to the conference table repeatedly. Though the conflict, hatred, and wars in the Middle East and elsewhere seem never to end, the leaders of the nations and the people who follow them yearn for and strive for world peace. The depletion (real or alleged) of natural resources drives the nations of the world together. Without cooperation among the nations we are told we will soon run out of oil and natural gas and other forms



of energy. What we must see in all these things is the fact that our sovereign God is working all things according to His purpose in Christ. God is setting the stage, so to speak, for Antichrist.

Events within the visible church in the world also clearly point to the fact that the end of all things is at hand. We have witnessed in the last twenty or so years the merger of several large, mainline denominations. Many of the churches, perhaps most, are members of the World Council of Churches, and in the U.S.A. of the National Council of Churches. Huge segments of the church, many of which are not affiliated with the W.C.C. or the N.C.C., are completely dominated theologically by Arminianism which our Reformed fathers did not hesitate to call "the Pelagian error out of hell" (Canons of Dordrecht, 1618, 1619; Head II, Rejection of Errors, Article III). It can be demonstrated repeatedly from the history of the church that Arminianism leads to liberalism and a complete denial of the fundamentals of the truth of Scripture. Protestants are flirting with the Romish Church. In spite of Vatican II and recent pronouncements from the Bishops of Rome, Rome has not changed. The mass is still an "accursed idolatry" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XXX, q. and a. 80). There is among the churches widespread doctrinal departure from the truth of Scripture. Cardinal truths such as: double predestination, creation in six days, the creation of Adam and Eve and their fall into sin through the temptation of the devil in the form of a serpent, the miracles of the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, irresistible grace, limited atonement, the imminent destruction of the present heavens and earth and the creation of the new heavens and earth, the reality of hell, and more are denied. There is compromise on key issues affecting the Christian life of obedience to the will of God. Among these key issues are: the condoning of homosexuality in spite of the clear teaching of Romans 1 and other passages; approval of movie attendance and dancing; the desecration of the Lord's Day; ordaining women in church office; couples living together even though they are not married. The Bible speaks clearly on all of these issues, so clearly that no one can misunderstand what he reads in Scripture concerning these issues. To evade this issue the theologians have invented a "new hermeneutic," a new rule of Bible interpretation which allows them to compromise on these issues. What may have applied in Bible times is no longer appropriate for today. What this means, therefore, is that all of this compromise is really a denial of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. There has arisen within Protestantism a new hierarchy between the man and woman in the pew and the Bible. That new hierarchy consists of the

Doctors of Theology who are needed to tell the rest of us what the Bible says and what it does not say. The fact remains, the Bible has not changed; much of the church has changed. Our comfort in all of this is that God's Word which is sharper than any two-edged sword, which pierces to the joints and marrow and is a discernor of the thoughts of man's heart, endures forever! All of this has affected the worship of the church. Preaching, the chief means of grace, the means by which the sheep of Christ hear His voice (cf. John 10, Romans 10), has suffered tremendously. Much preaching amounts to little more than brief homilies on social or other issues. No longer is the Word of God expounded in all its riches, power, and beauty. After all, if it is only Paul's or Peter's word and not God's, why preach at all!? The inevitable result of this is that God's people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). These phenomena among the churches also clearly point to the nearness of the end.

No doubt, however, the clearest sign of the nearness of the end of all things is the denial of the antithesis by much of the church. Scripture's admonition to God's people is: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:14-18). The church has long ago lost sight of this call to separation. More and more the church moves closer to the world and cooperates with the world and fellowships with the world. Pronouncements are made on social and economic and political issues. Rather than preaching the gospel of the Scriptures with its call to faith and repentance, the church proclaims a social gospel. The concerns of the church do not include faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation from sin and death by God's grace in Christ. Instead the church is concerned with world hunger, poverty, peace among the nations, justice, the rights of women and minorities, etc. To be a "Christian" does not make a difference with most. Few there be indeed who find by God's grace the narrow way with its straight gate which leads to life. Rather than seeking the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness the church seeks to establish an earthly kingdom of God. Its affection is



on earthly things and the church has lost its vision of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not difficult at all to see how church and world become one. The day cannot be far off when the beast out of the sea and earth will arise to universal power and rule. In those days the godly will suffer great persecution. They will be able neither to buy nor sell because they refuse the mark of the beast.

Does this mean God's cause is lost? Is there no hope for God's people in all of this? Will the church ultimately go down to defeat? Is the future for the faithful only bleak and fearful? Not at all! God's people must understand and they must believe that

God is sovereign and Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings. God is working out His eternal purpose and counsel in Christ. Out of all these things God's Kingdom of righteousness and truth is coming. For the elect's sake those days of the end will be shortened. Christ is coming to bring all of His own to Himself. Then they shall be where He is.

We live in perilous times to be sure. Our comfort is: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Timothy 2:19).

## The Coming of Antichrist

*Rev. Steven Houck*

The coming of Antichrist is one of the signs of the second coming of Christ. The Bible teaches us that the last days will be characterized by wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, apostasy, great tribulation, and more. The coming of Antichrist, however, is one of the most important of all these signs. Jesus warned us about Antichrist when He said, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24). These false Christs and false prophets are a part of the kingdom of Antichrist. The apostle John teaches us that Antichrist was already present in his day. He says, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard the antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John 2:18). We are living in the last time. Antichrist is already developing. Therefore, it behooves us to read the signs of the time and beware of the coming of that great enemy of God and His people.

The word "anti" means "against" or "instead of" and indicates the chief characteristic of Antichrist. Antichrist is one who is opposed to Christ and seeks to be Christ instead of the true Christ. Antichrist seeks to destroy Christ and the Kingdom of Christ. But, further, Antichrist seeks to establish

His kingdom and rule in the place of Christ. He would be honored and worshiped as God in the place of Christ. The apostle Paul speaks of this when he writes, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, 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 worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:3-4). Antichrist is the man of sin who opposes the true God and exalts himself as God.

This is because Antichrist is raised up, empowered, and controlled by the archenemy of God, the devil. We see the relationship between the devil and Antichrist in Rev. 13. There we read of two beasts — one who rises up out of the sea (v. 1) and one who comes up out of the earth (v. 11). These beasts represent Antichrist as a political power and as a spiritual, religious power. Of the first beast it is said, "And they worshiped the dragon (the devil - S.H.) which gave power unto the beast" (Rev. 13:4). Of the second beast it is said, "And he spake as a dragon" (Rev. 13:11). In II Thessalonians 2:9 the apostle Paul informs us that Antichrist's coming is "after the working of Satan." Thus Antichrist has its origin in the devil and represents Satan's effort to dethrone the Christ and rule in His place that



finally he may "ascend above the heights of the clouds" and "be like the most High" (Isa. 14:14).

Although Antichrist may be one individual man, or a group of men, the Bible teaches that Antichrist is also a world kingdom. In fact, Antichrist is a world confederacy of many nations. The whole world will be united under one head as the terrible kingdom of the devil. All the "Christian" nations will gather together under Antichrist. This is referred to in Revelation 17:12-13, "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." But also the "heathen" nations will join together with Antichrist. We read of that in Revelation 20:7-8, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

Thus the "Christian" and "heathen" nations will all unite together to form one great antichristian world power which seeks to destroy the kingdom of Christ. God will allow Antichrist to have temporary, but supreme rule over all. The wicked desires and plans of the devil will be instituted. The world at large will love it. But it will be a time of terrible persecution for the true Church. John tells us concerning the Antichrist, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:7). Concerning the religious aspect of Antichrist, it is said, "And I saw the woman (false religion - S.H.) drunken with the blood of the saints" (Rev. 17:6). For when Antichrist is here in all of its fulness, all will be required to worship him. Those who refuse will be persecuted. Thus it will be a time of great tribulation. Jesus said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). When Antichrist is here in all of his fulness, God's people will be required to seal their faith with their lives. For the choices will be very simple. You either forsake God, worship Antichrist, and live, or you stand fast in the Faith and suffer the wrath of Antichrist. The dividing line between true faith and unbelief will be very distinct.

All of this indicates that Antichrist is not here in all of its fulness. We do not yet see the fulness of a world political power or a false world religion. We do not yet suffer the great persecution of that day. We may still worship God as we please. Yet, Antichrist is surely present in this world. This is what John teaches us in I John 2:18. In fact, in a certain

sense, Antichrist has always been present in this world. Even in the old dispensation there were types of Antichrist. The typical Antichrists sought to destroy God's people so that the Christ would not come into the world. The devil knew that if he could keep Christ from being born, he would have the victory. Thus we read in Revelation 12:4, "And the dragon (Satan - S.H.) stood before the woman (old dispensational church - S.H.) which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." We see this effort in the antichristian kingdoms of Babel, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome, and many others. The wicked kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar is especially typical of Antichrist. He built an image of himself and required all to worship him and his kingdom by bowing down to that image. If anyone refused they were thrown into the furnace. Thus he opposed Christ and sought to be worshiped in Christ's place (Dan. 3).

It is with the first coming of Christ, however, that Antichrist appears on the scene in all of his power. No, Antichrist is not here in all of its fulness, but it is developing. It is coming more and more. We see it in the developing world unity. Nations have joined with nations in world alliances. Nations are cooperating together in many different ways — for defense, science, trade, and commerce. The United Nations is testimony of that fact. It seems that nations are willing to give up some of their national sovereignty for the sake of world unity. We can see in this the coming of the one world government of Antichrist.

We see Antichrist's coming especially in the false religion of our day. Jesus warned us to beware of false Christs and false prophets for good reason. They are everywhere. Not only are nonchristian religions becoming popular, but the "Christian" cults are growing very dramatically. Besides that, many "Christian" denominations have departed from the truth and are no more Christian than the Eastern religions. Even "Reformed" churches have become apostate or are in the process of becoming apostate. There is very little left in Christendom that is true church. Antichrist is here now with its false religion. "That man of sin" is sitting in the "temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

We see Antichrist in the persecution that we experience today. In some places God's people must give their lives for the sake of the Truth. But even in America many of our freedoms are being taken away from us. God, the Bible, and prayer have been banned from the public schools and from all agencies of the government. Many of the antidiscrimination laws of our land are sufficient to close down our parental schools as well as our seminary. More and more our churches will be open to perse-



cution from the state as we refuse to bow before a state that seeks equality for women, children, homosexuals, and others in all things (even religion). How many of us fathers could be put in jail for such a thing as properly disciplining (spanking) our children. As the world unites politically and philosophically we will more and more be the outcasts of our own society. When we can no longer be tolerated, we will be put into prisons and killed for our faith.

Indeed, we must be on guard. We must be careful that we do not go along with the world and its antichristian religion and philosophy. We must stand fast in the truth even though it means persecution. While the world goes after the lies of the devil, we must hold to the Word of God. We must stand with Christ at all cost. In these days, and even more so when Antichrist is here in his fulness, we dare not depart from the Truth for convenience

sake. Then we join with the devil, the wicked world government, and false religion. One stands either with Christ or with Antichrist. If you stand with Antichrist then you will be destroyed with him. For when all seems to be secure in his hands, Christ will come and put an end to it all. For Antichrist is the "wicked" one "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Thess. 2:8). Antichrist shall fail. The devil shall fail. For Christ is the King and His kingdom shall never fail. The devil, the beast, and the false prophet shall all be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). But you, who faithfully stand with Christ against Antichrist shall "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

## The Preaching of the Gospel as a Sign of Christ's Coming

*Rev. Kenneth Hanko*

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. Matthew 24:14

In Matthew 24 God teaches us that all of history must be understood in the light of its end. False prophets and apostasy, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, tribulation and iniquity, even the rise and rule of Antichrist himself are signs of Christ's second coming. They can be understood properly only when we look at them as progress towards the goal of the fulfillment of God's purpose: the glory of His name through the salvation of the church in the new heavens and earth. The things and events of history are signs because God so governs every one of them that they all, willing or unwilling, knowing or unknowing, serve the advancement of His cause in the world.

This is also true, perhaps especially true, of the preaching of the gospel.

By the term "gospel of the kingdom" the text tells what is the content of the preaching which the church does. We may describe that content in different ways, but here the Scriptures direct us to look at it from the viewpoint of the kingdom.

The kingdom of which Jesus speaks here is the kingdom which God promised to, and typically established in, the nation of Israel. But the Old Testament kingdom was only typical. It was not the end, but only the beginning, of that which God has eternally purposed to establish. The kingdom was realized in the kingdom established by Jesus' death, ascension, and pouring out of the Spirit: the church.

That kingdom is a heavenly kingdom, not of this world. The establishment of it begins in this world, and for a time it exists in this world, but it is always, in its essence, heavenly. It has a heavenly king: God in the exalted savior Christ. Its citizens become citizens by a heavenly work, and by the



bestowal of heavenly characteristics: regeneration and everlasting life. Its full glory and final establishment cannot be until all of the citizens have been born and taken to heaven and the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ in the new heavens and earth.

We must therefore look at the establishment of the kingdom of God as a process. This process began with the establishment of the typical kingdom of the Old Testament, or, better yet, with the promise of God in Genesis 3:15. It will end only when the last elect child of God has been glorified. And from the beginning to the end God builds that kingdom by gathering its citizens.

This work God accomplishes by the preaching of the gospel.

The gospel shall be preached in all the world. There is implied here the fulfillment of the command which Jesus gave to His disciples after His resurrection when He said, "Go ye into all the world, and teach all nations . . ." Before the end comes every nation, tribe, and tongue under heaven will have heard the gospel of the kingdom. God will not rest, and will not let His church rest, until this word of Jesus has been fulfilled.

The gospel is preached to all nations for a witness. The gospel gives a faithful and sure testimony to the work of God in Christ, the establishment of the kingdom in righteousness, and the promised perfection of that kingdom in heaven. It testifies that the Lord is coming in judgment, and calls on men everywhere to repent and believe. The testimony of that gospel is both a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death. Many reject and refuse to believe the witness of the gospel, and hear the sentence of Christ, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But a few, the chosen, believe, and at the second coming hear the sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The gospel of the kingdom goes forth as a witness to all nations, therefore, in order that eventually the multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, may sing before the throne and before the Lamb.

And that is the connection of the preaching of the gospel with the end. On the one hand the end cannot be until the catholic church has been fully gathered. All of God's elect must be saved. On the other hand the end is when the church has been fully gathered. There will be no need any longer that this world continue to be: God will have accomplished His purpose in it.

That is why the preaching of the gospel is a sign

of the second coming. But we must be very careful here. This sign cannot, just as the other signs cannot, tell us the day and hour. When these things begin to come to pass we may look up and lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh, but at the same time we must remember that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night, and that it will seem to us that our Bridegroom tarries long.

We may not therefore take it into our heads that the signs are fulfilled and that we may sleep while we wait. It may seem to us that the gospel has indeed been preached to all nations, and we know that, if it is not true yet, it is very nearly true: our redemption draweth nigh. But the Lord has not come: the signs are not yet completely fulfilled.

Therefore hear again the words of our Lord, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . ." Hear it with a renewed knowledge of its urgency. There is no more important thing for the church of today than that urgent "Go ye . . ." Let nothing, no matter how important it may seem, let nothing, not wars or the threat of war, starvation, pestilences, or earthquakes, iniquity or tribulation, wicked men or the powers of hell, let nothing divert you from the preaching of the gospel. By the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom the end is coming.

And let not one of you think that he can be free from this burden. On every minister of the Word there is laid the command to preach where the Lord calls or sends. And on every child of God who hears that Word there is laid the command to carry it with him from the church to the world, to live it and to speak it and to let the light of the truth shine as from a hill. Do not think, people of God, that the ordained preachers of the gospel must or can or will do all your work for you. They speak to you in order that you may speak to others. The preaching of the gospel must not stand alone. It is the command, power, content, and end, for your witnessing. If you will not speak, God will give what you now hear to others who will.

Preach confidently and boldly. Though the whole course of history seems to be against you and contrary to the purpose of our God, nothing can prevent or delay the swift return of our Lord. Nothing can stop the preaching of the gospel to the nations until the last one of God's elect children has been saved. Wicked men will take you before their councils, they will mock and beat you, and command you to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. If you obey God rather than men they will kill you and drive you to the mountains, but the gospel of the kingdom *shall be* preached in all the world, the end will come, and you will be, with all who have gone before you, heirs of the everlasting kingdom of heaven.



Preach everywhere. Send out your missionaries wherever it pleases God to open a door. Pray for them and support them by whatever means you can. But also, at every opportunity, and in every place, give answer with meekness and fear. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Preach enthusiastically. God will use you for the salvation of His own, and for the establishment of His kingdom. Preach therefore with the sure hope that the end of your work is the perfection of God's kingdom, and the joyful hearing of the words of your Lord, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## *Take the time to Read and Study The Standard Bearer!*

### News From Our Churches

July 13, 1985

Picture this scene in your mind. A married man enters the living room, picks up the *Standard Bearer*, and after reading the News From Our Churches throws down the magazine, grumbling about the outdatedness of the news. Here are Staff suggestions given to me to improve the news reporting from our churches. 1. Get a little more variety in your news. (Something difficult, because you are dependent on people furnishing you with news.) 2. Try to avoid outdated news . . . 3. Spark up the account a bit for the sake of interest. These are worthwhile suggestions which point out the need for the church news editor and the churches to work together to make the news current and interesting to the reader. For my part in sparking up the account I will vary the way in which the news is written. For your part in this worthwhile endeavor, you will need to send me a variety of news in advance of when it will take place, e.g., the events happening in September should be sent to me three weeks before the month of September. With some extra effort on our parts the News From Our Churches can become even more interesting, while encouraging our readers to read the whole magazine.

Should young people read the *Standard Bearer*? In answer to this question I will quote Rev. Joostens' remark to graduates. "But Paul described it well to Timothy. 'But men shall be lovers of their own selves . . . ever learning and never able to come to

the knowledge of truth' (II Timothy 3). We live in perilous days! For a while we have the tremendous privilege of being taught in distinctively Reformed schools. But soon, as young people of God, we are propelled into further education or a vocation where the Truth is challenged on the basis of mere human knowledge. Often this comes to us under the guise of godliness, but a denial of the power thereof. Be careful! You must constantly evaluate, you must constantly test against the only and complete standard of the Truth, the Scriptures. This world is full of learning which is devoid of Truth . . ." Reading the *Standard Bearer* is another way for our young people to evaluate the words of men.

The golden key in mission work is \_\_\_\_? Here is Rev. Ken Hanks' conviction. "The mission conference which I attended in G.R. this week was profitable in some ways, and rather disturbing in others. The main thing that is disturbing to me is that it seems to me that there is sometimes too much emphasis put on methods, use of pamphlets, Bible studies, etc. I have come gradually to the conviction that there are two important things in all mission work: 1) the official preaching of the Gospel, and 2) the living witness of the people of God. And these two are inseparably connected. The witness must be impelled by and governed by the preaching of the Word. Without these we cannot expect that God will bless our work." What is your



answer to the question above?

The Grandville Church, in Michigan, reports that the Grandville Planning Commission approved their purchase of the property at 4320 40th Street. They have closed on the property. Work is already beginning on engineering plans for street and utilities on Pineway Avenue and the designing of a future parsonage.

The clothing drive conducted in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area a couple of months ago for the Jamaican mission field was quite successful. The Jamaica Mission Committee would like to thank all who gave to this cause. The clothing is currently being stored, awaiting a decision by the diaconate of First Church as to the best way to distribute this.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 11, 1985, MR. AND MRS. FRED HANKO celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren rejoice with them and also thank God for their instruction in Godliness and for their making of the home a haven of fellowship and love.

"One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." (Psalm 145:4)

Pete and Jan Westra  
Peter, Scott and Kevin  
Mitch and Ellen Dick  
Fred Hanko  
Brian and Carrie Dykstra  
Lynnae

Dave Hanko  
Dan Hanko  
Mary Hanko

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 21, 1985, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. WILBUR G. BRUINSMA, SR. will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our covenant Father for the blessings bestowed upon them and us these many years.

It is our prayer that God may continue to guide them on their earthly pilgrimage so they may experience that — "the Lord is good: His mercy is everlasting: and His truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)

their grateful children and grandchildren,

John and Judith Kalsbeek  
and nine children  
Lewis and Donna Bruinsma  
and seven children

Rev. Wilbur and Mary Bruinsma  
and three children  
Keith and Wanda Bruinsma  
and four children

### NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in Loveland, Colorado on September 4, 1985, at 8:30 AM. Delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the Clerk of the Loveland Consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma  
Stated Clerk of Classis West

The Evangelism Committee of South Holland Church, Illinois, received this remark in a letter from a person living in Moorestown, NJ. "... How ironic that many Arminian churches post a neon sign, 'Jesus Never Fails,' or, 'Jesus Saves,' and from the pulpit they teach the opposite! ... THANK GOD, that it is He that does the saving and does so sovereignly. Amen Brother! Love to you all ..."

DH

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society, "Ruth", of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church extend their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Fred Huizinga in the death of her brother, MR. DICK VANDER LOON.

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

Jon Huiskens, Pres.  
Marilyn King, Sec'y.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to one of our members, Miss Lubertha Bykerk in the death of her mother, MRS. ELLA BYKERK.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

Mrs. E. Bol, Pres.  
Mrs. E. Peters, Sec'y.

### IN LOVING MEMORY

One year ago, on July 31, 1984, our Heavenly Father suddenly removed from our midst and took to Glory, our beloved wife, mother, grandmother, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law and aunt, MRS. ANNE BYLSMA. It is our prayer that our God will continue to comfort and sustain us in the future, as He has in the past year.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Mr. Ken Bylsma  
Ken Jr. and Cindy Bylsma  
Rich and Kathy Feenstra  
Steve, Keith and Doug  
Kevin Bylsma  
Mrs. Gerritt Bylsma  
Mr. and Mrs. S. Bylsma

Mr. and Mrs. M. Koerner  
Mr. and Mrs. E. Cammenga  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Buiter  
Mr. and Mrs. F. Block  
nephews and nieces  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 11, 1985 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least three weeks prior to the convening of this meeting.

Jon Huiskens  
Stated Clerk