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Reading the time on the face of God's clock!

Part 1: Rebellion against God

As we may look abroad and see the evidences of the passage of the weeks and months of the year in the realm of nature, in the evidence of the physical decline of the human body, not to mention the movement of the hands on our clocks and watches, even so may we look around and note the indications of the passage of time in the lifespan of this world as it is revealed to us in the Bible.

Christian, the Bible is a map by which we find our way to heaven but more than that, it also marks the present position of mankind on the way to the end of the purpose God has for this earth!

Satellite Navigation is not new! Just as I can insert a destination into my Sat Nav and then watch my progress upon its screen as I journey toward my destination, even so I can observe exactly the present position of humanity on its journey toward eternity!

In keeping with my title, the Bible will tell us of the passage of time and the approach of the final hour for this world.

There are given to us in the Bible certain features that will mark the end of this age. These features may be seen in times past, but never to the degree of union and fusion as they will be seen in the last days!

I want to look at some of these features and observe their pre-eminence in the affairs of today, from the nations afar off to our own doorsteps. I think that as we look at these increasingly predominant elements of life today we will see that one is linked to another. There is a successive springing forth and developing out of each other. One wickedness gives birth to another of great depravity!

1. MAN HAS BEEN IN REBELLION SINCE THE MOMENT THE DEVIL WAS HEADED AND THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT WAS EATEN!

In Genesis 3:4-6, we read of that tragic event! From that time mankind has been following in the footsteps of Adam and Eve who, when they "heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: . . . hid themselves from the presence of the LORD," Genesis 3:8.

The hiding from and rebelling against God is evident today as never before!

Oh yes!, there is no new sin under heaven but what is new and distinctive today is the universal acceleration of sin and rebellion against God!

Furthermore, the remnant of faithful followers of God has been reduced to pitifully small dimensions! Was it not to this the Lord Jesus referred? "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8. The end of this age is to be a time when the remnant of God's people will be small.

Do we not see the incoming tide of defiance of God and the outgoing tide of obedience to God today? Has not the 'putting green' replaced the 'people in the pew'? (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-49162116>)

I think that we can and that to a degree that it has aroused many Christians, hitherto smitten with a spirit of slumber and indifference, to a state of alarm and anxiety and questioning just what is taking place around us!

2. PERIODICALLY, OVER THE CENTURIES, THE DEVIL HAS BEEN PERMITTED TO RAISE UP AGENTS WHO HAVE SOUGHT TO PROMOTE AND ADVANCE REBELLION AGAINST GOD.



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We have the first of such in Genesis 4:1. "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD."

Eve was very much mistaken in thinking that Cain was a man from the Lord! He was very much the opposite. Cain, we are told in the New Testament, "was of that wicked one, and slew his brother," 1 John 3:12. Cain defied God's instructions regarding how He was to be worshipped.

The Lord had illustrated this in the slaying of the animals to clothe Adam and Eve, Genesis 3:21. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." A covering was needed for Adam and Eve before they could be allowed back into God's presence and that covering required a sacrifice, a life had to be taken and blood shed!

Picture

Here was a perfect and wonderful revelation of the way of salvation for sinners! The cross is foreshadowed here. Christ in His sacrificial death is presented to us. We must be clothed in the garments of Christ's righteousness so that we are made acceptable to God and eligible for glory.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. and one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Revelation 7:9-17.

The garments worn by Adam and Eve were provided, prepared and placed upon our first parents by the hand of the Lord. Hence, "Salvation is of the LORD," Jonah 2:9.

Works

However, Cain rejected the revelation and instruction of God and offered instead of a lamb, by way of indicating his faith in the Lamb God would in His time provide, the fruit of the labours of his own hands!

The ways of Cain and the way of Abel comprise all the religious activities of this world today. There are still only two religions. That of the Way of Works and that of the Way of Faith in Christ, God's Lamb. As there were two religions in the wake of Adam's transgression, that of Cain's way of work and Abel's way of obedience and faith, so those two religious views continue today!

Cain's way has spread under many names, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Romanism and its many bastard children etc, etc,. But all these 'religions' have this in common they teach that people MUST WORK THEIR WAY TO PEACE AND JOY IN THE WORLD TO COME!

Religious observances and rituals may differ in name and form but they are all instituted to bring their religious adherents to eternal happiness.

The religion of Abel, it may fairly be said, likewise carries many names today. Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian etc. However, the way of Abel amongst all these different denominational tags and titles is to be traced in a common faith in WHAT THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES!



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True Christians of whatever denomination are marked by a fervent clinging to the Word of God.

The Bible only

Isaiah said: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," 8:20.

Such a believer's creed is reproduced in many places in the Bible.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes," Psalm 19:7-8.

"The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" Jeremiah 8:9.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God," Matthew 22:29.

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me," John 5:39.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," John 20:30-31.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," Acts 2:41-42.

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts 20:20-21, 27.

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

The final words of the Saviour before His ascension to glory emphasised the message He would have His servants preach.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen," Matthew 28:18-20.

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things," Luke 24:46-48.

It is this message that mankind has ever rebelled against and rejected.

3. IN THE FEW SHORT YEARS BEFORE THE SAVIOUR RETURNS TO THIS EARTH IN GLORY AND GREAT POWER, THERE WILL BE AN INTENSIFYING OF MAN'S OPPOSITION AND REBELLION AGAINST GOD.



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We must watch for it and note its approach and development for it is part of the plan and purpose of God in the last days!

"The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Isaiah 14:24-27.

"And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant," Jeremiah 51:29

It will be a time when God, in order to bring about the conclusion of His will and purpose amongst the nations, will permit the devil a greater degree of freedom. Such a loosing will be, of course, to bring about God's sovereign will and plan.

The Devil cast down to earth

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time," Revelation 12:7-12.

This casting of the devil out of heaven and his time of wrathful activity upon the earth will take place just before the Saviour's return. Note the words: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

The devil has been active in his rebellion against God from some time before the creation of the earth. That being so, according to Biblical chronology, that was some 6000 years ago.

In the last days there is a period, frequently mentioned, of forty and two months, 1260 days, or time, times and half a time. (See Daniel 7:25, 12:7, 11; Revelation 11:2, 3, 12:6, 14; 13:5.) These various definitions of time amount to three and a half years. This, I believe, refers to that time when the devil is granted a measure of unrestrained activity amongst men. It is that period referred to by Jeremiah as "the time of Jacob's trouble".

"And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it," Jeremiah 30:4-7.

The great tribulation

That period is commonly called the time of the 'Great Tribulation'. It is given that title as a result of the Lord's words in Matthew 24:15:22.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the



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holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

This period of 'great tribulation' comes just immediately before the return of the Saviour. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," verses 29-30.

Consequently, the time of 'woe to the earth' and satanic 'great wrath', that time when the devil knows that 'he hath but a short time', is the same as that defined as the period of tribulation beginning three and a half years before the Saviour's glorious second advent. The fact that the Lord calls it the 'time of Jacob's trouble' would indicate that it will centre upon the land of Israel.

Man will take out his hatred against God upon His ancient people and upon those who have embraced the gospel of Christ. Daniel tells us of this time of cruel activity on the part of the devil's champion, the Antichrist.

"And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High (Hebrew: 'wear away by constant harassment'), and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time," Daniel 7:24-25.

This period is likewise mentioned in Revelation 13, the chapter which depicts the Antichrist at the peak of his short-lived power! "And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them (Greek: 'get the victory'): and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations," verses 6-7.

Look around!

Now, I ask you, can we see anything of this spirit abroad today? Is there evidence that the time spoken of by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, has broken out upon us?

Consider what Paul said.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Can we see anything of this spirit manifested amongst society today? I dare say that you must be blind if you do not!

The perverse and indecent 'swanning abroad' of the sodomite in his 'pride', the disobedience amongst the young, the selfish unthankfulness evident everywhere, the fierce and furious raging everywhere seen on our streets, rendering them utterly unsafe for the quiet citizen; the slaughter of the unborn, legalised by society; the innocent infants cruelly done to death by mothers and fathers; the dedication to self-indulgence



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and pleasure-seeking — all this is evident today.

Now there was never a time in earth's history when such activities were not evident, BUT I defy anyone to refer to a time when it was so **universal**, so **prevalent**, so **common**, so **accepted** and so **generally embraced** and **welcomed** as it is today!

Wickedness is not only seen amongst the poor and deprived, for whom it is claimed that their deprivation is an excuse for such behaviour, but the spirit of rebellion and profligacy is everywhere to be found. It is amongst the rich and the advantaged, right up to Presidents and Parliaments and even our own Royal household!!

I repeat, there has never been such a time of universal and unplumbed, chasmic wickedness as is now evident across the nations of the earth.

Surely the hands on God's clock are nearing the midnight hour!!

To be continued.

Rev Ivan Foster.

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