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Reading the time on the face of God's clock, Part 2: Violence

I will repeat the words of introduction which appeared in our first chapter.

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 the 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 greater depravity!

The Lord Jesus tells us that "as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be," Matthew 24:37-39.

The indifference to the spiritual and moral atmosphere that prevailed back in the days of Noah is depicted in the words of the Saviour. Such complacency and apathy were most strange, given the general moral climate of that age. It is a complacency mirrored by today's laxity regarding the general decline of society's morals.

Here is what we are told of those days in Genesis chapter 6. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence," verses 5 and 11.

The word 'violence' in verse 11 is a word the Lord uses to describe the state of mankind back in those days just prior to the flood. Dr Usher's Chronology, which is highly regarded and respected, dates this period some 1700 years after the creation.

That of which it is first recorded "and God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," Genesis 1:31, is now "corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence," Genesis 6:11.

It does not take long for sin to destroy God's handiwork and render it perfectly soiled and ruined! It is to be noted that the Lord says in Genesis 6:11 that "the earth also was corrupt before God." When the order that God has ordained is 'marred', 'spoiled' and 'corrupted' then violence bursts forth.

The word 'violence' (Hebrew - chamac) has a breadth of meaning. It is translated in places by the English words, 'wrong, cruelty, injustice'.

1. It is to be noted that the cause of the corruption and violence is put down to the actions of men.



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"all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Man has not only been destroyed by sin but he has become a sinful destroyer! He has become an agent for the advancement of wickedness. Now, just as "can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh," James 3:12, so man, the corrupter and destroyer, can not be the source of good as well. The utter depravity of mankind is here stated.

Man is a destroyer and corrupter of God's creation. He was sent forth by the Lord "into the garden of Eden to "dress it and to keep it", but through sin is now a destroyer of the garden of God's earth. The words 'dress', and 'keep' mean to serve and to preserve. In these days of panic with regards the 'vandalising of creation' that man is beginning to recognise, it is interesting to bear in mind that man is indeed the author of his own misery! Creation groans, as Paul states in Romans 8:22, and the groans are the result of the corruptive violence of man toward God's creation.

But it is not only God's natural creation that has become the subject of man's violence, it is also he himself who suffers from his sinful violence. Man is violent toward himself! He abuses his body, his mind and his soul! The city streets of the world are 'littered' with the consequences of man's self-abuse! The drunkard and the drug-addict lie in their desolate state of self-destruction. They are so ruined by their own ways that they are invariably beyond help.

Man imbibes that which destroys his body. He heeds and believes that which destroys his mind. He refuses that which will heal and redeem and save his soul! As was said of Israel long ago, may be said of sinful man throughout the ages. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," Hosea 13:9. It has to be noted that the drive for self-destruction is accelerating. Man has become more violent in his rejection of the gospel.

Man is violent toward his fellow man. Oftentimes that means those nearest to him, those he would be expected to love and to cherish. His wife, his children. His father and mother! I need not rehearse what is daily presented to us in our newspapers and television news reports! Indeed, what is the subject of many news reports is but the very tip of the iceberg of wretchedness, wrought by the violence of man upon his fellow human being!

Man has lifted a violent hand against the Lord Himself! "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts 2:22-23.

Of course, this violence toward the Lord is not limited to the Jewish people. No, every nation is guilty of this violence. The Lord Jesus told Saul, or as we know him today, Paul, on the day of his conversion, that he was guilty of persecuting the Saviour. "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," Acts 9:4-5.

To persecute a believer is to persecute the Lord Jesus. He feels the pains and the violence inflicted upon His people by wicked men.

As man has lifted his hand in violence against believers so it is an act of violence against the Lord!

This truth is repeated in the Saviour's setting out the details of the judgment of the professing church. He rewards and He punishes in accordance with men's actions toward His people.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared



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for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal," Matthew 25:37-46.

2. Though man has been violent since the fall of Adam, yet we see a universal increase and intensification of that violence today.

The first murder was a most violent one. A brother killed a brother and that utterly without cause! Cain was angry at the words of witness spoken by Abel his brother. They were words of the uttermost truth, spoken gently and without malice, spoken in love for Cain's eternal soul!

Yet Cain's response was violent and murderous!

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him," Genesis 4:8. It was an act inspired by the 'father of murder', the devil. "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous," 1 John 3:12. There is that of the 'brute beast' in the actions of Cain. "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core," Jude 10-11.

Are not the homes and the streets of the cities of the world becoming as a jungle? Rage, animal rage, is the order of the day! It is seen everywhere, especially on our roads where people act as animals when they perceive someone is hindering them in some way.

I have often watched videos of the animal world and observed the snarling and ferocity of one animal against another, often part of its own family or pack, when it is perceived that it may lose some food to another's hungry mouth!

Is this spirit not seen constantly today!

Such attacks invariably take place upon the weak. When they do happen, do we not see a 'pack' of similarly-minded 'animals' cheering on the aggressor and showing not the least concern or pity for the victim!

This is violence indeed.

This violence, as we have already noted, is nurtured by the devil. "He was a murderer from the beginning," John 8:44. As this age degenerates ever more through the ongoing rejection of the gospel and man's defiance of God, the influence of the devil increases. That can only mean one thing! More and more of the devil's persona will be seen in the affairs and actions of mankind! He is as a 'roaring lion' Peter tell us, 1 Peter 5:8, and more and more wicked men will take on his likeness.

It is to this Paul refers in 2 Timothy 3:1-8, when he speaks of perilous times. I have often mentioned before that the Greek word, translated 'perilous', appears only in one other place. It is in Matthew 8:28. "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way." It is translated in this verse by the English word 'fierce.' The fierceness of these two men stems from the fact that they were under the dominion and power of the devil! They have taken on the violent, fierce character of the devil! They attack all and sundry and could not be controlled or tamed or curbed, Mark 5:3-5.

That being so, we have a picture given us here of the character of the 'times' that shall develop more and



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more as the end of this age draws on. They will be satanic days. Days characterised by the ways of the devil.

Remember what was said of Judas? "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. . . . He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night," John 13:27-27, 30.

Note these details. Judas was taken over by the devil, he went out from Christ into the darkness of the night! That is what is coming upon this world.

The possession of Judas by the devil led on to the greatest act of treacherous violence and injustice ever committed in the history of mankind! The treachery enacted against the Saviour by those to whom He came on a mission of mercy!

3. The culmination of this increasing violence will find its fulness in the person of the Antichrist.

That is what the devil is aiming for! He would be 'God the Father' and would have His 'Christ' for the world to follow and adore and also his counterfeit 'Holy Spirit', the False Prophet, spoken of in Revelation 13. "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 exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 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," verses 11-16. He had the appearance of a lamb but spoke like the devil! What an apt description of the false and deceitful spirit which will exercise his power at the close of this age!

The whole 'ministry' of this False Prophet is one of violence and that toward any who refuse his commands. He caused "as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." That is in keeping of course with the disposition of his master, the Antichrist!

There are many pictures of the Antichrist in Holy Scripture and 'rage' against God is a frequent feature displayed.

Sennacherib king of Assyria was just such a foreshadowing. Hear what the Lord said to him and in so doing, foretells the words He will direct at the future Antichrist. "But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest," Isaiah 37:28-29.

Another example of the raging of the Antichrist against God and His truth and His people is seen in the person of Nebuchadnezzar.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it



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known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," Daniel 3:13-22.

God has not left us in ignorance of the character of the closing days of this age. One of the earliest prophecies of them is found in the second psalm.

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," verses 1-6.

There will be a 'raging' violent anger against all that is of God in the last days and that world-wide. Day by day we see its development taking place before our eyes.

Daniel tells us that to the end of the Antichrist's short-lived defiance of God he will show rage and fury.

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him," Daniel 11:45.

Here is the Antichrist in his final days. He is angered by news from the north. That news is, I believe, the report that his city Babylon is conquered. This throws him into a blind rage and he sets out to destroy Jerusalem in his rage. The word 'fury' in these verses carries the meaning of 'poison'. It is a poisonous rage from which he will die for in going to attack and destroy Jerusalem he brings down God's wrath and destruction upon his head and that of his allies.

It is to be noted that it is the 'rage' of the Antichrist that will bring about his destruction!

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee," Zechariah 14:1-5.

This is the same scene that is depicted in Revelation 6:12-17.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;



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and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

It is only when the Saviour returns to reign over this earth that man's devilish, sinful raging violence will end and peace and calm ensue.

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isaiah 2:1-4.

What a blessed hope the child of God has!

Here is our 'rainbow' which testifies of a coming day when storms will cease and the sun of God's mercy and grace will shine upon this earth to its furthest reaches.

Oh happy day! Dear Lord, hasten its dawn we pray. Amen!

Ivan Foster.

19th August 2019.