

OUR BANNER.

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EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR.

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As we enter a new year, it becomes us to take our bearings, and know if possible, the way over which we are to pass. Issachar was commended because the "men had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." Since that day the history of the world, and many inspired prophecies have been written, giving us an infinite advantage over them, and increasing our obligations. With the divine assurance, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy," let us study to know our duty and privileges, and to be prepared for them.

The prophet Daniel, outlined the coming of the Messiah hundreds of years before the event, so that interpreted on the year-day theory, (Num. xiv. 34 and Ezek. iv. 6,) "each day for a year," the time and place were accurately known. He has also given two other views, covering the ages from his day until the complete conversion of the world to Christ. Believing that these are as intelligible as the other, let us study them in order to catch some glimpses of the prospects of the Church, and of the time of attaining to them.

In Daniel ii. 19, etc., Nebuchadnezzar's dream is interpreted, and Daniel says: "The great God hath *made known* to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain and the interpretation thereof sure." Four consecutive world-powers were to arise and prevail for a long time in opposition to true religion; but "a stone cut out of the mountain without hands" should destroy the entire image, and become a mighty kingdom filling the whole earth. Nebuchadnezzar is declared to be the head of gold; he was to be succeeded by an inferior kingdom of silver, this again by one of brass, and that finally by one of iron, which was to deteriorate in strength, unity and honor, until destroyed by the kingdom of the stone. All this was literally fulfilled in the capture of Babylon by the Medo-Persians about B. C. 558, in their overthrow by Alexander about B. C. 325, in the subjugation of the Greeks by the Romans about B. C. 70, and in the degradation of the Roman Empire into the ten kingdoms of Europe,

the base toes of a once glorious kingdom, which are hastening to destruction.

The stone which is to destroy and supersede all these is explained to be a kingdom of divine origin, and supernatural in its wise policy and means of prevalence and power. It fulfills the first promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" for it destroys the satanic powers that oppress the Church. It recalls Joseph and Joshua, who, as glorious deliverers and types of the promised seed, are called (Gen. xlix. 24,) "the stone of Israel." But Isaiah xxviii. 16, describes the deliverer as "a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation," and as "laid in Zion" by the eternal Lord. Jesus applies to himself (Ps. cxviii. 22): "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes." In Matthew xxi. 42-44, he plainly shows that this is not to be in and by the Jews, but by a nation which succeeds them as a kingdom of Messiah, and by which he will "grind to powder all on whom this stone shall fall." Peter also before the Sanhedrim applies it to the gospel kingdom of the Lord Jesus, the community of the saved, which was then miraculously inaugurated, is now grandly filling the world, and promises soon to overthrow all earth's governments and to set up in their room "kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever."

The only mark of time here is in the fact that the golden head is not smitten, nor the silver arms, nor brazen thighs, nor iron legs; but the now ponderous stone strikes the *toes* of the image; the final triumph, whatever conflicts precede it, is not to be until this latest form; and the contrast of the little stone with the great image suggests that in the early stages the kingdom of Christ gradually progresses, while the image as gradually declines. As Joseph and Israel through trials and bondage were prepared for their future exaltation, so Christianity, sitting in sackcloth or exerting its influence in the midst of hostile nations, prepares itself and the world for the all-conquering display in which it shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever. The Church must serve God in the wilderness and be transformed by his gospel and grace before the proud kingdoms of earth are driven out of her promised inheritance. The past lowliness of the Church, and the long delay of Christianity in setting up the kingdom, are not evidences of decay and ultimate defeat; but are declared to be the gracious purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own unchangeable will, and will yet hasten till the "small one shall become a strong nation."

A second prophetic vision, given to Daniel himself, is found in the 7th chapter. The great sea and the four winds and the four beasts denote universal humanity controlled by powers in all quarters of the earth. The former vision emphasized the unity of the world-powers as a kingdom of Satan, this shows their distinct existence and succes-

sion. The inspired interpretation identifies the fourth beast with the fourth kingdom, and the first three beasts are evidently identical with the other three kingdoms as Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar. The lion is Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon; the bear with three ribs in its mouth is Cyrus and his three provinces, Media, Persia, and Babylon; the four-winged leopard is Alexander of Macedon, whose four generals soon divided the Empire they helped to conquer; the fourth beast is Rome, the iron kingdom, but the ten toes are now ten horns, the Empire divided into separate kingdoms. An added feature is the uprooting of three horns by a little horn which had the eyes and mouth of a man, and in pride blasphemed the God of heaven and persecuted his saints: this is the Papal power, an anti-Christian nondescript, a Church-state with world-wide control.

The destruction of this terrible power is by the Almighty God. The Ancient of Days gives universal power to the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus, who executes consuming judgments upon the beast and its representatives, and gives their dominion to the holy ones who follow and serve him. The result is, "The beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. . . . They shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end." The instruments of this destruction are not named, but Paul says: "That wicked, whom the Lord shall consume with the brightness of his coming." The transfer of the kingdom to the saints is described as the gift of Christ. "They shall take" implies a position of antagonism, a moving in an opposite direction from the beast; yet indicates no violence on their part, but simply a willing acceptance of the gift. They have had their warfare, their sufferings, their prolonged trials in maintaining separation from ungodly governments and in testifying against usurped authority; the witnesses have long before been slain, have finished their sackcloth testimony, and have been raised to heaven, a separate Church state, that from its heights they might send forth the lightning and voices of gospel power. And now the kingdom comes to them from him whose crown rights they proclaimed in opposition to the usurpations of their enemies, and as the reward he provides for them who overcome by his blood and by the word of their testimony. But the transfer is complete; the kingdom is theirs forever; yea, "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven." The people of the saints have the kingdom, and all rulers shall serve and obey the Lord Jesus.

A distinct period is here assigned to the little horn, the last phase of the Roman power, and at the end of this the millennial kingdom is to be set up: "Until a time, times, and the dividing of time." The same phrase occurs in Daniel xii. 7, as the time allowed to "scatter the power of the holy people," and in Revelation xii. 14, as the period in which the woman with "two wings of a great eagle might fly into

the wilderness, into *her place*, where she is nourished from the face of the serpent." This last differs from the woman in the first part of the chapter who "*fled into the wilderness, into a place prepared of God,*" and through whom "Satan was cast out into the earth;" for this one is helped by the earth, and the devil turns from her to persecute "the remnant of her seed." They all refer to the apostate church, the Papal power, which still exists, and is full of craft and malice; so that God's people are still divided and the churches are enfeebled by unholy union with the civil powers. Both "wings" of the Roman empire are still dominated by the Greek and Roman apostasies; and the mass of Protestants, and even the Reformation churches are in full political fellowship with Erastian usurpations of Christ's supremacy, or with an open infidel constitution of government. The Covenanters are the only organic exceptions to this; and both in America and Britain, they refuse to accept the corrupt constitutions of government, testify against the dishonor done to Christ, and consequently receive the full force of Satan's rage against 'the remnant' who will not sacrifice the truth for the sake of civil favor and power.

The phrase is generally understood as "a year, two years, and half a year." Some take it literally and apply it to Antiochus Epiphanes; but it is commonly referred to the Papacy, and as synchronous with the "forty-two months" of Revelation xi. 2 and xiii. 5, is interpreted on the year-day theory. But there are three modes of calculation: Fleming in 1701, counted it as lunar months of twenty-nine days and a fraction, amounting to 1,242 year-days; the common computation made the month thirty days, and the whole to be 1,260 year-days; the third computes the months and years as they are actually, forty-two months, or three and a half years, containing 1,278 year days. But three different starting points are named for the period: The edict of Justinian, A. D., 533; the decree of Phocas, A. D., 606; and the grant of Pepin, A. D., 752. Taking the first, the period ended according to the different modes of calculation in 1775, 1793, or 1812; and this period of thirty-seven years was signalized by the American Revolution, the Reign of Terror in France, England's bloody wars, Napoleon's devastating campaigns, the dire extremities of the Papacy, and the organization of the great societies that have since evangelized the world.

Taking the second starting point, the terminations will be in 1848, 1866, and 1884. The first two are past without realizing Christian hopes, but were remarkable as covering a wonderful era of gospel advancement and of terrible blows to the kingdom of Satan. The Free Church movement in Britain, the unprecedented vigor and extension of Protestant denominations, the revolutions of 1848, the subsequent changes in the map of Europe, the transfer of Empire from Popish to Protestant hands, the decadence of Russia and Turkey. the

abolition of slavery in the United States, and the mighty movements for Civil Service reform, prohibition of the liquor-traffic, the Christian amendment, the Sabbath, and all moral reforms, and more than all, the amazing power and success of missionary enterprises that increase as the years advance, all indicate that anti-Christian power is ready to be destroyed, and that National Reform is soon to possess our own land, and to bless all nations with Christian governments.

All history, however, attests that prophetic time is not shortened years of 355, or 360 days, but years of actual duration ; and in every calendar our period covers 1,278 days, or prophetic years. Moreover, the year 606, whether the true beginning of the power of the little horn, or not, was the date of a most important development of the blasphemous claims which it puts forth ; and we may justly expect corresponding developments of the power of Christ, and so our current year, 1884, the sum of 606 and 1,278, will fill up that measure of its continuance and inaugurate a glorious advance of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus. What then may we anticipate as about to come ? We expect that Romanism will cease to dominate the governments of the world ; that Mohammedanism will pass away as a gigantic imposture controlling the powers and peoples of Asia and Africa ; that the Czar and his Greek apostacy will be overthrown ; that the Erastian kingdoms of earth, whether in union with Romanism or corrupt Protestantism, will be revolutionized, probably by red Republicanism, making way for Christian government to be set up on the ruins of both ; that our infidel government which has so long fostered Romanism, Mormonism, slavery and its unholy spirit of caste, political corruption, immorality and crime, and has openly robbed the Lord Jesus and his Church of their rights and honors, will be superseded by a Christian Republic ; and that either as a means to or a result of these, the Church will be one in all the earth, its staves of beauty and bands becoming one in the almighty hand of our Prince and Saviour.

How is all this to be accomplished ? There are three theories : It is held, but wholly without Scripture warrant, that it will be by a corporeal coming of Christ in judgment upon the ungodly ; it is thought that it will come chiefly, if not wholly, by moral and spiritual means greatly quickened by fuller outpourings of the Spirit of Christ ; and it is believed to be effected by spiritual agencies as the prime cause, but also by these exciting the wicked to physical conflicts and bloody revolutions, and by devastating judgments from the Lord Jesus upon his incorrigible foes. It is the work of Christ Jesus ; it is " without hands," as it is divine in its origin and power ; but it is pre-eminently the work of the Holy Spirit as Christ's agent, and he employs the " saints " both with the spiritual weapons of the gospel, and with the sword of a Joshua, a Gideon, a Jephtha, a David, making way for the victories of peace. The Spirit will be given as floods upon the dry ground ; from the threshold of the church living waters will " flow eastward "

ever widening and deepening ; on the banks of the gospel river the tree of life will bend with fruit and be ever green with nation-healing leaves ; and from "the temple of God opened in heaven" there comes a sight of "the ark of his Testament," and also "lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and great hail," a commingling of spiritual, moral and physical instrumentalities.

Glorious beginnings of all this we expect before the present year shall close ; but when and how the perfected glory shall come we dare not assert, but we humbly wait with the assurance that it will surely come and will not tarry. The signs of the "last days" are even now around us on every side : signs in the heavens and in the earth. The secular papers have summed up the events of 1883 as unprecedented in many of its disastrous features, inexplicable in the power of the secret forces that have combined in producing its results, and as ominously burdened with causeless uneasiness and alarm. We see the signals flashing from the throne of our King, the answering signals of his faithful followers, and the signals of the devil and his legions gathering for a yet more desperate effort to perpetuate their power. Let the Church hear the call, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Let us all hear the solemn question and answer that come to us on every breeze : "Who is this that cometh . . . with dyed garments, glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury ; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

AFTER THE BATTLE.

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The whirlwind of battle ! After its thunder and roar have died away, we hear the groans of the dying and wails of despair. After smoke and dust have lifted, we see torn flesh, and shattered limbs, and, streaming tears, and breaking hearts. It is *after the battle* the horrors of war are seen. Its misery, however, is the teacher of important lessons.

The Covenanter Church, in Ohio, has been a battle-field, not where the descendants of Scotland's martyrs have been pitted against the devil with his hoard of thieves, fornicators, adulterers, murderers—such warfare had been glorious ; but where the "father has been divided against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother." There seems to have