

“YOUR DELIVERANCE DRAWETH NIGH”

(The discourse below is by Wilfred McNee. It was given in Bellingham, June 27, 1976.)

Our text is Luke 21:28—“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Weymouth renders this—“But when all this is beginning to take place, grieve no longer. Lift up your heads because your deliverance is drawing near.” And Rotherham renders it this way—“And when these things are beginning to come to pass, unbend, and lift up your heads, because that your redemption is drawing near.”

As to the word “redemption” we have a comment from the Pastor that makes this more understandable to us. We read from Volume 6, page 159: “... we are referred not to the work of redemption accomplished in the sacrifice of our Lord, but to the results of that work as they shall be accomplished in the perfecting of the Church, which is his body, in the First Resurrection.” The questions in Matt. 24:3 were prompted by Jesus’ statement that the temple would be destroyed. The questions seem to contain more than the thought of the destruction of the literal temple and must therefore, be related to John 2:18-21, where Jesus said that the temple of his body would be raised up in three days. Luke 21:28 relates directly to this since the understanding of the signs indicate the nearness of the deliverance of his body, which takes place after the second presence.

From this, perhaps, we can get a picture in our mental vision of a weary, way-worn, traveler plodding along the dusty road, head down against the stormy wind, pulling his tattered garments tightly about him. The way has been long and his shoes are worn, his feet are tired, his knees are bent with age, his hands are calloused from laboring in the vineyard, his body bears the scars of the battles of faith, his face is lined from painful experiences, there are little crow’s feet wrinkles about his eyes as he looks ahead to catch the first glimpse of a city in a foreign land, whose builder and maker is God. Suddenly he pauses, his eyes look up, he unbends his bowed back, straightens up, his head stretches forward, a cry of elation breaks forth from his parched lips and a light is kindled in his eyes as he catches a glimpse of the lights of That City. Faintly, he hears the sound of a trumpet heralding the dawn of a new day which is beginning to dispel the darkness of the night. With renewed energy his pace quickens as he hurries on, for the end of his journey is in sight.

“When you see these things...” What things? The things that are taking place in the earth that are visible to, not only the eye of faith but also the natural eye as well. The 21st chapter of Luke, the 13th of Mark and the 24th of Matthew all contain parts of our Lord’s great prophecy. In Luke’s account, Vs. 20-24 deal particularly with the events that came upon natural Israel when cast off as a nation. Then, omitting the entire Gospel Age, he takes us down to the events which deal with the end of the Age. In Matthew’s account he

outlines some of the events of the Gospel Age in Vs. 7-14, and then in Vs. 15-22, deals with some of the things pertaining to nominal spiritual Israel in the end of the Gospel Age. We will deal with Luke's account since this is the chapter of our lesson.

Vs. 25—"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring." Vs. 26—"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

There were literal signs in the heavens, such as the Dark Day of May 19, 1780 which was a day and a night of unusual darkness over the entire New England states. Then on Nov. 14, 1933 there was a display of falling stars which was visible in much of the North American continent, which has apparently never been equaled, before or since. While the first of these signs took place long before the beginning of the harvest, it is interesting to note that it took place between the American Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 and the end of the 1260 prophetic days of Daniel in 1799. Meteoric showers are most active in August and November and reach maximum brilliance and activity every 33 years. It is worthy of note that this most exceptional display of Nov., 1833 was soon after the Second Advent movement had its beginning in the work of Bro. Wm. Miller. This movement began at the end of the 1290 days of Daniel, in 1829 A.D.

The symbolic fulfillment of these signs of course, applies to the darkening of the light of the Gospel Sun, and the light of the moon, which represents the Mosaic Law, and the withdrawing of the light of the Apostolic stars. The falling stars applies to the stars of the nominal heavens. Before going on to these things, we would first like to call your attention to some interesting facts brought to our attention in Vol. 4, pages 584 to 588, where Bro. Russell refers to this "land of liberty" symbolized by the "Statue of Liberty." "It is not surprising that these literal signs were given in this land nor that, subsequently, the message of Harvest Truth was sent forth from this land. Also that it was used to give many of the modern blessings and inventions and lessons." On page 584, referring to the ending of the 1260 year-days—"practically in 1776 and actually in 1799." We wondered why this date of 1776 was introduced in this connection. Apparently this was one of the above mentioned "lessons" which was exported from this land because this was the date of the American Declaration of Independence and the lesson of the American Revolution helped to lay the groundwork of the demand for liberty which was one of the reasons for the French Revolution. The French Revolution had its start in 1789 and continued in various stages for the next five years and, in fact, really ended when Napoleon took power as France's first Consul. The history of this man of destiny is outlined in Dan. 11:36-45. The date of 1799 is pinpointed during his Middle East campaign and "tidings out of the East and out of the North" troubled him so that he returned to France. Napoleon effectively broke the Papal power in 1799 thus fulfilling the 1260 years of Daniel's prophecy.

It is interesting to note some of the contents of the American Declaration of Independence. We quote: "When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shown, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great Britain is a History of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World." A long list of these facts follows. It is nothing short of amazing to realize that a declaration such as this could have been worded at that time.

The Statue of Liberty was a gift of the French People to America. It was designed by the French artist Bartholdi. It arrived in 214 packing cases in New York from Rouen, France in June, 1885. It was completed and dedicated by President Cleveland in October, 1886. It is interesting to note that the Divine Plan of the Ages was published in this same year which resulted in the intellectual enlightenment of many of God's people, not just in this land, but throughout the whole earth.

The Lighthouse service originally kept the Torch burning, but funds were provided which made it possible to install permanent lighting which was turned on by Pres. Wilson in 1916. On the 50th anniversary of the Statue in 1936, President F. D. Roosevelt said: "The realization that we are all bound together by hope of a common future rather than by reverence for a common past has helped us to build upon this continent a unity

unapproached in any similar area or similar size population in the whole world. For all our millions of people there is a unity of language and speech, in law and economics, in education and in general purpose which nowhere finds its match. It was the hope of those who gave us this statue and the hope of the American people in receiving it that the Goddess of Liberty and the Goddess of Peace were the same.”

A poem by Emma Lazarus is graven on a tablet within the pedestal on which the Statue stands:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glowes world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Thus was expressed the noble sentiments concerning this Land of America, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty. To countless millions of people it was indeed, a land of liberty and peace, for they fled from their own countries to escape persecution, especially religious persecution.

The American Declaration of Independence in 1776, the sign of the dark day of 1780, the end of the 1260 prophetic days in 1799, the fulfillment of the 1290 days in 1829, the sign of the falling stars of 1833, were all leading up to and pointing to that momentous event at the end of the 1335 days, A. D. 1874, when our Lord was due to return to gather together his saints and to establish his kingdom. While there were many good reasons for the Providences of God to be over this land, we think that one of the most important was that the message of Present Truth was to go forth from this land to commence a work of Harvest. These Harvest Truths were coordinated and written down so that the Lord’s people could read it and understand it, by the Messenger to Laodicea, that wise and faithful steward appointed by the returned Lord. This thought of the dissemination of Truth is given in Isa. 18:1, 2: “Ho to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers to a nation scattered and peeled [outspread

and polished] to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down whose land the rivers have spoiled.”

This seems to appropriately describe the work of sending forth the message of Truth during the Harvest by means of the printed page so that it would eventually reach all who would comprise that “holy nation” who have been called out, drawn forth, developed under the most adverse conditions but finally, will be presented faultless before Jehovah, as the Bride of His Son. This is suggested in vs. 7, where it says: “In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.”

Going back to Luke 21:25—“... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring.” Years ago, the historian H. G. Wells commented on world conditions to the effect that the world was on a one way street and the end was destruction, that there was no way out. The word “perplexity” in our text is from a Greek word meaning “a quandary” (*Aporia*). This is based upon another word, *aporie*, which has the thought of “no way out, to be at a loss (mentally).” We believe this to be a good description of world conditions as they have existed upon the earth during the past 25 years especially. The Times of the Gentiles ended in 1914 signaled by the outbreak of the first World War. However, great as was that spasm, it really took the shock of World War II to set in motion those forces which will bring about the end of this present evil order. We realize that there are many events in the earth which could be used to show how these conditions have developed but we will concentrate on one line of thought to illustrate.

The Vancouver Sun on June 15, 1974 carried an article in which the views of Mr. Bruce Hutchison, Editorial Director of the Sun, were expressed in regard to the Federal Election in Canada. In his remarks he said: “the election should be viewed against the background of a universal revolution that is the greatest in mankind’s history. It is not the classic, textbook revolution, with the swish of the guillotine or the rattle of the tumbrel. It embraces every human creature on earth. The universal revolution encompasses poverty in some countries, the redistribution of wealth and power in Canada and the phenomenon of a fiscal madness we call inflation. The revolution means that there can never be a return to the norm. There is no norm and not much comfort for those who try to stand still or march in the opposite direction.”

In the vision which Elijah saw, there was a wind, an earthquake and a fire, then the still small voice of God, speaking peace. The wind symbolized war. World War I was, we might say, of the conventional, pre-1914 style. World War II started out in the same way but soon gave way to a new pattern of warfare. Today, there is little resemblance to the old style of warfare in any of the wars that are occurring from time to time. We are

becoming more familiar with the description of “guerilla warfare.” This type of warfare is going on right now in most of Southeast Asia, in Palestine, in some parts of Africa, in Ireland, in South America, and—yes, even in North America.

Also in the Vancouver Sun, June 15th, there was a column by the writer Richard J. Needham entitled “Where to go when there’s nowhere to hide.” This outlined the contents of a book written by David and Holly Franke, which recommended “safe” places in the U.S. for tourists to stop. There were remarkably few. Near the end of the article, the writer says, “We’d be wise, in my view, to make peace and order our main public concern—even ahead of housing, of inflation, of pollution. I think the Americans themselves would like Canada to stay safe—so that we could give them, when and as they need it, a place to hide. And here I close with a question. The balloon has gone up in Detroit or Buffalo or New York or Cleveland—fire, riots, looting, gun battles, ANARCHY. Thousands of Americans make their way to the Canadian border, demanding entrance and safety and shelter, maybe backing that demand with weapons. Just what do we do? Just where do we go from here? We may have the courage to say, ‘No, kindly keep your civil war to yourselves.’ But we certainly don’t have the power.”

These few remarks can, I am sure, conjure up before your minds the many incidents that we read of daily that are going on in the U.S. Do you recall some of the high sounding phrases that were contained in the American Declaration of Independence? What a contrast to the conditions which now prevail in this land, and, in fact, the sentiments of this Declaration could almost form the blueprint for the army of discontents to overthrow the existing government.

Under British rule, slavery had been practiced for many years in the British Colonies in North America, mainly in the Southeast parts. Despite the championing of the rights and privileges of the individual as set forth in the American Declaration of Independence, slavery was not abolished, but was continued until the practice was broken, though not completely, in the Civil War of 1861-65. The abduction of Blacks from their homes in Africa and the selling of them into slavery in the American colonies is one of the worst blotches on the pages of human history. These conditions are starkly revealed in the recently published book, by Alex Haley, entitled “Roots.” The British and the U.S. governments must share the responsibility of that terrible practice, and others of the old Colonial powers as well, and this is the basis of the retributive character of the troubles which are confronting these nations today.

This thought is again suggested by a quote from another clipping from the June 20th Sun: “Britain is becoming a very dangerous place, one of the country’s top police chiefs warns. Anarchy was never associated with the British character, but I now see this as a distinct possibility, James Haughton, president of the Association of Chief Police officers, told a conference of chiefs Wednesday night. An ever-increasing population in an already

overcrowded island with rapidly dwindling resources, aggravated by greed, violence and corruption, provides little optimism for the survival of our present way of life.”

Is it any wonder that men’s hearts are failing them for fear? for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth? Psalm 107:25-31—“For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.”

Then Luke goes on to say: “for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” We have learned that the “gospel light of the sun” and the light of the “moon” from the Mosaic Law and the teachings of the Apostles, the twelve stars, have all become obscure. The nominal heavens, which exerted a measure of restraint, are vanishing away, having been spewed out in 1878. The pulpit stars have fallen from their spiritual eminence and descended to the Christian-politics-citizenship level. This is another reason for the troubles that are upon Christendom. Just as the Law kept Israel on a higher level than her neighbors and had a beneficial effect on the surrounding peoples, so, wherever the Bible has gone, it has had an elevating and ennobling effect. Now as the influence of the Word of God diminishes, we can see the corruption and depravity spreading throughout the earth. However, while the nominal heavens are dissolving, the true Spiritual Israelite should continue to let his light shine letting others know that beyond the clouds of trouble there is indeed, a silver lining, with untold blessings for this groaning creation.

Vs. 27—“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Matthew’s account says “then shall the sign of the Son of man appear in heaven.” It is suggested that this sign is the marvelous unfolding of the Divine Plan of the Ages, which harmonizes the hitherto contradictory passages of Scripture and enables us to comprehend the purposes of God toward mankind. In particular does it answer the question, What shall be the sign of thy presence? and thus becomes a proof or evidence of the invisible presence of our returned Lord. Another sign in the heaven is the judgment upon Babylon, the nominal spiritual heavens. If we can see these signs in the heaven then we can “see” our returned Lord by the eye of faith. We “see” him in these clouds of trouble in glory and power, that is, he is exercising judgment upon the nations and by his kingly power is causing their overthrow. The world does not so recognize him, but they do see the clouds of trouble in the world, but will not see who is behind the clouds until he is revealed in the Apokalupsis.

Vs. 28—"But when all this is beginning to come to pass, unbend, lift up your heads, rise and be elated, because your deliverance is drawing near." When the members of the Body of Christ recognized the signs of Presence at the beginning of the Harvest it was certainly an occasion for jubilation and excitement and, of course, still is, but those of the Lord's people who are alive today can see the fulfillment of the events in the first verse of our lesson on a scale that was not thought of by brethren 50 years ago. In fact, the fulfillment of these things is so startling that our hearts would be failing us for fear also, except that we know the cause and the outcome. As an offset for this we have such assuring promises as are found in Psalm 46:1-3—"God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the present organization of society be dissolved, and though the kingdoms of earth be overthrown and swallowed up by a revolution of the people who will refuse to be longer ruled by them." (Reprint 686, literal translation.)

Then the 4th verse goes on—"There is a river, its rivulets cause to rejoice the city of God, the sanctuary of the dwelling of the most high. God is in her midst, she shall not be moved, God will ever help her, at the dawning of [her] morning. Nations rage, kingdoms are moved, he letteth his voice be heard, the earth melteth away. The Lord of hosts is with us, a defense unto us is the God of Jacob. Come, look at the deeds of the Lord, who hath made desolations on the earth. He causeth wars to cease unto the end of the earth, he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in pieces, he burneth wagons in the fire. Leave off, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted on the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us, a defense unto us is the God of Jacob. Selah." (Leeser)

On the return trip of my first trip to the Prairies, I was able to look down upon the mountains which were covered with snow and I could make out the tiny little rivulets from the melting snow on the mountains. Then they would join to others to form a larger stream and on down to join a large river and finally empty into the Pacific Ocean. Snow represents stored Truths, and it is from this storehouse that the Lord's people have fed upon the Truth which has nourished them as New Creatures during their consecrated life. As the Lord's little ones prove faithful to death, these "rivulets" are gathered together, until, when all completed, they will form that "river of life" which will bring life and happiness to this groaning creation. God has given the promised help to the Church throughout the Gospel Age, but He has promised special help at the end of the Age, "in the Dawning of her morning." We are in the "dawning of her morning" because Jesus said that he would raise up the "temple which is his body" on the third day. We are in the beginning, 100 years into it, of that 1,000 year day, which is the third such day from the time that our Lord uttered those prophetic words.

While the Lord of hosts is with us and is a defense unto us, we can witness the raging nations, the moving of the present kingdoms, and the melting of the symbolic earth.

Soon, the present evil world will be destroyed and swept away, the Church will be completely glorified, and the earthly phase of the Kingdom will be fully established. For, “he causeth wars to cease unto the end of the earth, he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in pieces, he burneth wagons in the fire. Leave off, and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted on the earth.”

Then our text goes on to speak of a parable. “Behold the fig tree, and all the trees.” (V. 29) We believe that the fig tree refers to the nation of Israel, which was reestablished as a nation after 1915 years of not being a nation. We are all well aware of the events which began in 1878 when the Jewish double of disfavor ended until May, 1948, when the nation of Israel was proclaimed. We are convinced that Israel will never again be driven out of her land, though all nations of earth be gathered together against her. But, as proof of the time that we live in, witness the demands of the other small nations of earth for independence and a share in earth’s bounties. The demands of independence from Quebec should be considered in this context, as well as those of the Irish, of Scotland and Wales, and Viet Nam and the countries of Africa and Asia, etc. When you see a literal fig tree, or any other kind of fruit tree in bud, you know that the Spring has come, and that the Summer time for the ripening of the fruit is at hand. “So likewise, when you see these things come to pass, know you that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

In the verse of our lesson (28) it says—“when these things begin to come to pass.” Note that V. 31 says—“When you see things come to pass.” There is quite a difference. The first signs that we considered at the beginning of the lesson. were “beginnings” of things coming to pass but this last sign is a “has-come-to-pass” thing! The nation of Israel is a specific thing and between the years of 1878 and 1948, we could refer to this event of its reestablishment as a nation as a “beginning,” which did cause rejoicing on the part of the Church in an anticipatory sense. When an event takes place, then it is in the past and so we have seen this sign come to pass. The word “generation” means an age, the period or the persons. So then, the Gospel Age will not pass away, or, the people of earth who live contemporaneously with these signs, especially the last one, will not pass away until the Kingdom has been fully set up. The present symbolic heavens and earth will indeed pass away, but the New Heavens and the New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, will be established to take its place, thus fulfilling the words of God’s promises. So then brethren, the Church of this Harvest Period has seen these things begin to come to pass and the members of the Church living today have seen and are continuing to see things come to pass before our eyes—we are witnesses of these events. Therefore, “unbend” lift up your heads, rise with elation, because your deliverance is not only drawing near, but is at hand!