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# Looking Backward Over a Third of a Century of Prophetic Fulfilment . . . .

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Notes of an Address  
Delivered by H. A. IRONSIDE  
in the Bible Institute  
of Los Angeles, Calif.

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*Looking Backward  
over a  
Third of a Century  
of  
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# LOOKING BACKWARD OVER A THIRD OF A CENTURY OF PROPHETIC FULFILMENT

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Notes of an address delivered by H. A. Ironside,  
in the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Jan. 8, 1930.

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I call your attention to a part of the third chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter, asking you to notice particularly verses 3 and 4: *“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning.”* We are undoubt-

edly living in the days of which Peter speaks. The voice of the scoffer, particularly in regard to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus, is heard in the land. He insists that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. He is blind to the great changes taking place all about us. He knows not that these are in exact accordance with the prophetic word heralding the coming of the King.

It is now just a little over a third of a century since the present hope of the Lord's return became a very real thing in my own life and testimony. For over thirty-three years it has been my privilege to go up and down through the land helping to sound out the midnight cry: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." But lately,

while looking backward over this period of testimony, I have been amazed at the many evidences that the end-times are actually upon us. There are so many things predicted in the Scriptures as necessarily antedating the coming of the Lord to reign that were all in the future a third of a century ago, and are now either altogether in the past as actually fulfilled, or else in process of fulfilment at this very time.

In connection with these things I want to make it very clear that I do not know of anything which must necessarily happen before the rapture of the Church. This aspect of our Lord's return may occur at any moment. But many of us who are acquainted with the prophetic plan know that before the appearing of the Lord in glory with all

His saints, which will be some years subsequent to the rapture, there are many stirring events to take place, many remarkable prophecies to be fulfilled. Now if it can be shown that many of these predictions are already fulfilled or fulfilling, it will I think make it very evident that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him must be very close at hand. Since this event has to take place first, and the preparation for the glorious revelation of our Lord as King of kings which follows is already well under way, who can tell how soon we may hear the voice, the shout, the trump that shall summon us to meet Him in the air.

I realize that in the time I have before me I cannot go into detail as I would wish, but I ask you to notice three



lines of prophetic fulfilment, having to do particularly with the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God, the three classes into which the human race is divided, looking at it dispensationally.

Thirty-three years ago I saw from Scripture that when the Lord returns to set up His kingdom He will find the people of Israel a nation again, settled once more in their own land, apparently with a rebuilt temple carrying on the ancient ritual. A remnant of the nation will be converted and ready to receive the King when He appears; the rest will be given over to apostasy and to the worship of the Beast and the Antichrist. Now observe, until 1896 there was no evidence whatsoever of anything like this taking place. Then, like the sounding of a silver trumpet, came the first

Zionist proclamation. Theodore Herzl, like a modern Moses, lifted up his voice to summon the outcasts of Israel to return to Zion. But for years, in fact until 1914, his was as the voice of one crying in the wilderness to the rich Jews of Britain, France, and America. Judging him as a fanatic, they looked with disdain on his attempt to revive the national spirit in Jewry and to turn the thoughts of Israel toward their ancient patrimony. But to the poor Jew of northern and central Europe, suffering under the curse of anti-Semitism, the Zionist call came as the harbinger of a new day. Throughout the years congress after congress was held, but so far as getting possession of the land was concerned their hope proved abortive. Then in 1914 came the Great War, the

most awful catastrophe of the centuries. Month after month the dreadful conflict dragged on. Nation after nation was drawn into the fearful vortex, and the end seemed farther and farther away. Many asked in unbelieving despair, "How can a good God permit such frightful carnage, such a carnival of horrors?" I do not pretend to be able to explain the secret workings of the government of God, but one thing stands out so markedly that every eye may see. The War dragged on until, on December 9, 1917, the world was electrified by the report of the fall of Jerusalem. General Allenby had entered the sacred city and the Turk had surrendered without the firing of a shot. There are many remarkable providences in connection with this event that have

often been dwelt upon by prophetic lecturers, and I need not reiterate them here, but with the driving of the Turk from Palestine the end of the War drew on, and exactly eleven months afterward, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the Armistice was signed. God had accomplished that which He set out to do; He had opened the way for the nation of the wandering foot to return to Palestine. The British Government fulfilled the Balfour declaration in accordance with the promise made to Dr. Weizman, and Palestine was opened up as a national home for the Jew. The events that have transpired since have been in exact agreement with the prophetic word. In spite of various setbacks, considerably over one

hundred thousand Jews have been added to the fifty thousand already in Palestine at the close of the War. You are all familiar with the way in which the waste places of Palestine are being reclaimed, Jewish colonies established, new cities built, and old ones arising from their ruined condition. Nor need we be surprised at the intense opposition of the Arab population. As of old Ishmael mocked when Isaac was weaned, so to-day the sons of Ishmael look on with anger and indignation as the sons of Isaac are coming into their own. Material changes, too, are taking place; for with the re-forestation of the mountains and the planting of millions of "strange slips," as predicted in the prophetic word, upon the hills and mountains and in the valleys of Canaan, the latter

rains withheld for so many centuries are returning, and the British Government is providing facilities for conserving the water and irrigating the desert land. The riches of the Dead Sea are about to be converted into gold and silver for the rebuilding of the cities and villages of Immanuel's Land. How blind must be the scoffer who in the face of all this still exclaims, "Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were!"

Another thing that was clearly revealed in the Word of God, and which I accepted unquestioningly a third of a century ago, though we saw little evidence that we were drawing near to its fulfilment, was the statement in Rom.11, "That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles

be come in." The fulness of the Gentiles is clearly the completion of God's present work of grace among the Gentiles in taking out from among them a people to the name of the Lord Jesus, namely, the gathering out of the Church of this dispensation. When this great work is ended, God is to turn again to Israel, and many among them will be enlightened. In view of this we might well expect to see a measure of awakening as the end draws near. What are the facts? Why, they are almost beyond belief! Since the Great World War not only hundreds, nor yet thousands, but myriads of Jews have been turned to Christ. Particularly is this true in central Europe. But not only there, in other countries of the world the number of Jews accepting the gospel mes-

sage is phenomenal. Already the blindness is passing away. Many of the Rabbis, too, are unconsciously preparing the people for the coming day when they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. The greatest minds in Jewry are speaking out with approval of the message and teaching of Jesus, whom they themselves describe as "the fairest flower of Judaism." And in Denver, Colorado, lately a movement has been started by a Jewish lawyer toward the re-establishment of the Sanhedrin, the High Council of Israel, in order first of all to decide whether or not the Jews are guilty of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. If Jesus was indeed the



Messiah and they had part in His condemnation, the Jews are being called upon to confess their sin and repudiate the great transgression. There may not be so much to this as some Gentile Christians would hope, but it at least indicates the trend of things among God's ancient people to-day. The end is drawing on with rapid pace, and at any moment now the call may come for the Church to rise to meet her Lord in the air, and then the eyes of many in Israel will be opened and they will see from their own Scriptures how they have fulfilled the words of the prophets in rejecting Jesus, and will bow in repentance at the feet of the Crucified. Then a fountain will be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their sin and unclean-

ness, and so all Israel shall be saved. "They are not all Israel who are of Israel!" The true Israel consists of those who accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. The rest will be destroyed in the judgments of the great tribulation.

Now let us look at the second line of fulfilment, having to do particularly with the Gentile nations. Thirty-three years ago the prophetic word made clear the fact that there never could be more than four great world-empires until the coming of Him whose right it is to reign. But these empires had already run their course and passed off the scene. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome had risen one after the other, flourished for a time, subjugated the whole civilized world, held the barbarians in check, and then perished in their

own corruption. But the Scriptures of the prophets plainly foretold that in the last days the fourth of these empires, the Roman, would be revived. The first evidence of this would be seen in the coming into view of the feet of the great colossus of Daniel 2, composed of iron mingled with miry clay. The iron stands for imperial power; the miry clay for social democracy. More and more this condition of things prevails in Europe and the territory where the Roman Empire once held sway. The great problem of statesmen to-day is to so conciliate the population as to preserve something of the ancient autocracy while yet hearkening to the demands of the people. Following this condition of things we learn both from Daniel, chaps. 2 and 7, and Revelation,

chaps. 13 and 17, that there will be ten kingdoms on the ground of the old Roman Empire which will be banded together in the last days in a great offensive and defensive confederation, a league of nations, recognizing one man as supreme arbiter of the Roman world. As I look back through the years I can well recall how often when teaching along these lines I felt somewhat embarrassed as I noticed the unbelieving expression upon the faces of my hearers. To many the thought of a revived Roman Empire and of such a league of nations as this was utterly absurd. They could not conceive of its ever coming to pass. But how different are conditions to-day! Out of the World War has come one League of Nations which undoubtedly will soon

give place to another. The present League is not the infernal combination of the last days with its utter independence of God. But it is easy to see how the one may almost imperceptibly glide into the other. And then in regard to the revival of the Roman Empire : — Think of the remarkable things that have transpired in the Mediterranean countries in the last ten years. Without venturing any prediction as to what part that strange and complex character, Benito Mussolini, may play in the coming days, he is already accomplishing much to suggest that he was providentially permitted to attain his high office in order to pave the way for the very conditions predicted in Scripture. A few years ago he stood before the world as a red socialist seeking to de-

throne kings and overthrow existing governments. He was an avowed atheist, the son of a blacksmith, who declared himself opposed to all authority of either Church or State. Then came the fall of the Italian premier, and to the amazement of the world the blacksmith's son was summoned to the Quirinal and the premiership offered to him. Not only did he accept it, but about thirty other portfolios also. All the higher offices were headed up in him. Overnight he disavowed his socialistic principles, and became the advocate and exponent of a new despotism such as would have seemed impossible to put into execution a few years back. Repudiating his former atheism he professed himself a devout son of the Catholic Church, and astonished his follow-

ers by kneeling for hours in prayer before the image of his patron saint. His bombastic utterances backed up by tremendous ability to perform have astonished the world. He declares himself the Man of Destiny, chosen to revive the Roman Empire and restore it to its pristine glory. The Mediterranean, he declares, shall yet become a Roman lake surrounded by nations in alliance with Italy. His grandiose plans move on to fulfilment in spite of all opposition. At least six powers already are in alliance with Italy, and that the remaining ones will join the confederation seems to be just a question of time. If the Church was taken out of this scene to-morrow, how rapidly would events be headed up in exact accordance with the prophetic word!

The conditions, too, which will prevail at the end-times—I mean the moral and spiritual conditions — are already well advanced. Everywhere the civilized world is throwing off allegiance to the Word of God and repudiating its system of morals and religion. The days of Noah and the conditions of Sodom are being duplicated throughout the world to-day. Who can doubt but that the next great event which will startle a Godless world and arouse a sleeping Church, will be the summons for His own to meet the Lord in the air?

Then consider another recent development in the light of prophecy. According to Revelation 17, the Roman Church has still a large part to play in the events of the nations; for when the



Roman Empire is revived, Babylon the Great, this evil apostate system, is seen clothed in purple and scarlet riding the Beast. That is, the Papacy is yet to be recognized as the State Church of the Roman Empire, and this in spite of the fact that nation after nation has cast off her yoke during the last few centuries. For fifty-nine years the Pope has been known as the "Prisoner of the Vatican." From the days of Garibaldi to those of Mussolini, the Roman Church and the Italian Government have been at enmity. But lo, and behold, Mussolini speaks, and the Pope listens, and in a very brief period a rapprochement is brought about between the Vatican and the Quirinal. The Pope becomes King of Vatican City, and thus the Papacy dons the royal purple again, as well as

the ecclesiastical scarlet which it has worn so long. Everything is now in readiness for the Woman to spring into the saddle when the Beast comes up out of the bottomless pit, that is, when the Roman Empire is actually revived by Satanic power.

And now in closing let me speak of conditions in the Church of God. Thirty-three years ago when the prophetic word was first opened up to my own heart and mind, the Briggs trial was occupying the attention of the ecclesiastical world. Men were stirred to the depths of their souls as they realized that this man, a trusted educator of youth in a Theological Seminary, was infusing infidel notions into the minds of young men under his teaching. His denial of the inspiration of Scripture,

while moderate in the extreme compared to the flagrant unbelief so prevalent in the schools and colleges to-day, was looked upon with horror by sincere believers everywhere. Speaking with a well-known modernist preacher not very long ago, he said with a smile, "Yes, they thought Briggs a great heretic in his day, but if he were living now we would hardly think of him as a modernist. He had altogether too many old-fashioned ideas." This shows how rapidly things have been moving on the down-grade. The Liberal system of theology is permeating all our great denominations and has its seat in most of our seminaries of learning, and the truth for which our fathers died is being unblushingly denied and flagrantly rejected all about us. The apostasy has evidently set in

for good; that apostasy that is to culminate in the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, of Second Thessalonians 2, the deification of Humanity. God is being dethroned in order that man may take His seat, but "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Given a few more years of such rapid down-grade teaching as we have known for the last thirty-three years, and one may well ask the question, "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?"

But, blessed be God, there is another side to the picture, and if iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold, there is on the other hand increasing devotion on the part of many intelligent believers. The blessed hope is burning more brightly than ever in the

souls of real Christians, and the Word of God is being carried to the ends of the earth in exact accord with the declaration of the prophetic word. As the end draws on we may expect to see greatly increasing missionary activity. And our Lord has declared this Gospel must first be preached in all the world for a witness, then shall the end come. I purposely omit the words "of the kingdom;" they belong to Matthew, and it there refers clearly to the kingdom proclamation in the days of the "great tribulation." But in Mark's Gospel the Spirit of God simply says, "The gospel must first be preached among all nations," clearly implying that this would take place throughout the dispensation. And as the end draws on the messengers of the Cross are

pushing out into the most distant regions, so that to-day nearly every country in the world has been reached with the message. It is a witness testimony, and when the last has heard the Word, we may be sure the end is upon us. No one can tell when that moment may arrive, but even before that the Lord may descend for His Church, and the final witness testimony be completed by the remnant of Israel in "the time of Jacob's trouble."

Both time and space forbid more, but I trust we have had enough before us to make us realize the seriousness of the times in which we live and the importance of trimming our lamps as we wait for the summons to meet our blessed Lord. The nearness of the Lord's return constitutes a solemn warning to the

unsaved not to procrastinate but to heed at once the gospel invitation; even as it becomes a challenge to the Christian to live now in view of that coming day.





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