

"WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

ALARMINGLY evident is the fact that a day of judgment for this world of sin is near at hand as we observe the terrible conditions in the world today, and it makes us long for a better land. But there is also the assurance that a glorious day is at hand for the child of God. The Christian has a living hope. The outlook in the world induces us to pray: "Give me a heart like Thine," so that we will be ready to leave this world alive to escape the judgments that are coming upon the sinner.

God wrought wonders for His people in days of old, and His power is just the same today. That power transforms the lives of men and women and prepares them to meet God.

The Christian believes and is at peace; the skeptic doubts and is constantly in wonderment, fear, and turmoil. What a marvellous reward is derived from believing the Word of God!

The Watchman's Duty

We find in the Book of Isaiah:

"The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?"

"The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come" (Isaiah 21: 11, 12).

God said in another place, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem" (Isaiah 62:6). Watchmen were prophets, proclaimers of the truth, revealers of God's will.

There may be the query in the hearts and minds of people in the world today, "Watchman, what of the night?" Truly the night cometh — the midnight hour. When the hands of God's clock reach the midnight hour, nothing will stop the striking of that clock in judgment upon the sins of the world.

Modern Theories

It is not hard to believe the Word of God. It is easier to believe the record God has given us in His Word than to believe some of the farfetched modern theories. It is impossible to reconcile God's creative plan with the modern, so-called science of evolution. If you believe

one, you deny the other. People are trying hard to reconcile modern atheistic science with God's religion, but there is not much in common. True science and modern atheistic science are two different things. True science is the knowledge of facts. When we get away from facts we are only speculating — and much of modern science is only speculation.

The God of the Bible, the God of creation, can do as He pleases. He can set aside His laws of nature and all the recognized scientific laws, if He chooses, and work what is to us a miracle. He created the universe and all that is in it.

His will is sovereign, and the finite cannot comprehend the infinite; but man can believe the infallible truths found in God's Word. God has given us a record of His works, and it cannot be disputed. The truth cannot be compromised. Facts cannot be denied. Think of the effect of having faith in God's Word: a conscience void of offense toward God and man, peace and tranquillity of heart and soul in times like these when the world is upside down and everything seems to be going in reverse. Who can be a better "watchman upon the wall" than the one who has experienced God's salvation and possesses peace in his soul?

Eternal God

God is eternal. In other words. He dwells in the eternal present, and He can look down the line of time. through all generations, and see what is to take place, as clearly as He sees the things that are taking place at the moment. God is omnipotent. and omniscient.

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chronicles 16:9).

A perfect heart! An upright heart! "Give me a heart like Thine!" That prayer in sincerity from the one who is renouncing sin and the world, and taking his stand for God, is bound to be answered. No devil in heli, no combined forces on earth of men and devils can frustrate or thwart the plan and purpose of the One who said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

"Watchman, what of the night?" I am sure that if we cry out that question we shall hear the answer, "The morning cometh, and also the night." The morning cometh for the child of God. The morning comes for those whose heart is like His heart, who desire what He has, the blessings He bestows.

The night is coming, too — a darker, blacker, more despairing and terrifying night for those who have refused God's call and have paid little attention to what God has to offer.

Righteousness Exalts

Look at the world today. Look at the nations — the people. "Righteousness exalteth a nation:" We can look back to a time when the truth of God was revealed and mighty revivals took place, and the nation was exalted. Look at Germany, for instance. The light broke through at the great awakening. Luther and some of those worthy fathers of old took the Torch of Truth and held it high. As a result, thousands were swept into the Kingdom, and the nation was exalted.

Intellectually they became the greatest nation in the world, The educators and students who wanted the best in knowledge went to Germany. They took their postgraduate work in the German universities because the nation was exalted. The righteousness of God was among them.

But what happened? Higher criticism (destructive criticism, it should be called), modernism, modern theology, crept in and honeycombed and undermined the religious thought of the people and desecrated the sanctuaries of God. Men stood up and denied the divinity of Christ Jesus and the fundamental and cardinal principles of His doctrines. War lords stepped in; and, with their pride and self- sufficiency, thought they could conquer the world. The nation went down in despair to defeat.

England, another nation that loved God and honoured Him in years gone by, produced some stalwart 'watchmen for God. Others came from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to declare the truths' of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Mighty revivals swept the land. The Wesleys received the light of entire sanctification, and brought the message to America, and also preached it throughout the British Isles. It finally covered the world. God honoured it. Righteousness exalted the nation, and the people were known throughout the world as God-fearing and God-loving.

Then what happened? The insidious, soul-destroying doctrines from Germany came into England, and to an alarming degree undermined their simple fidelity and faith in God and in the truths of His Word — and God only knows where this thing will end.

Our country has been honoured as a nation of God-fearing people. Our forefathers planted the flag of freedom on this soil in the fear of God and the love for His truth. Our first president, our first congress, our first lawmakers at the inception of our government, were men who loved and feared God. They upheld His righteousness and decried sin. They legislated against anything that would encroach upon the freedom of worship and love for God. What is the outlook now?

Daniel Webster once said: "If we abide in the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper. But if we in our prosperity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden catastrophe will overwhelm and bury all our glory in profound obscurity." It was he, also, who said, "The most important thought I ever entertained was my moral responsibility toward God."

Would to God we had more statesmen today-with such thoughts in mind, with those principles at heart! We would have a different country, a different world in which to live.

Sin's Toll

It is a sad fact that most of our so-called prosperity today is attributable to sin, vice, crime, and war, American people -are spending billions on sin and degradation. Statistics tell us that 345,000,000,000 cigarettes were smoked by men, women, and children of America in a year. That is a rate of 141 packages for every man, woman, and child in our land. The nation's tobacco sales rank tremendously high. A total of more than \$3,000,000,000 is realized in a year by dealers of the product.

Gambling is another sin of the nation. The gambling rings are doing about \$22,000,000,000 worth of business in a year. Not long ago a measure was put before Congress endeavoring to make it permissible for our Government to practice lottery. Some of the biggest syndicates are those of vice and crime Their power is reaching over all the nation. Congress sends out a committee now and then to investigate, but what a poor pass they make in an effort to curb these destructive and vicious powers that each year are sweeping-untold millions to a lost eternity!

Licensed Evil

Liquor is one of the devices of Satan to bring human hearts and lives to destruction and damnation. In the first four years after prohibition was repealed, life insurance companies in this country turned down 183 per cent more applications for life insurance as a result of liquor, In one year about \$9,000,000,000 was paid out for alcoholic beverages.

Sin is destroying the nation, and liquor is playing an important part in it. There are more than 4,000,000 alcoholics in the United States. Civil governments have gone into the damnable, destructive business of licensing and selling liquor. We license, and then we arrest people, put them in jails and in, insane asylums because they have lost their mind and their self-respect. They lose their families, their homes, and their souls — all because they consume that vile stuff. A survey showed that our nation spends nearly \$1,000,000,000 annually for mental and hospital care.

We are revelling in sin and shame. Our crime bill, we are told, is \$1,710,000 every hour. No wonder God is letting the pall of fear settle down upon the people of our land. No wonder men are becoming alarmed because of national disaster and complete destruction and annihilation which threatens. Four top scientists have revealed the frightening prospect that bombs, when perfected, could be used to destroy the entire population of the world by radioactivity. It is time for God's watchmen to declare God's warning, that people may take heed and prepare to meet their Maker before, it is too late.

The Christian's Hope

These alarming things are signs of the day. "Watchman, what of the night?" What of the night? It is getting darker every day. But it means morning for the child of God. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." That is the hope of the children of God.

The coming of Jesus is the most important event that we have to consider today. No other outlook is bright.

Our nation is the wealthiest and strongest nation today, from an intellectual and scientific viewpoint. But while our nation has been revelling in sin, drinking liquor, running the gauntlet of vice and crime and shame, our super enemy has lost no time in fortifying himself for world conflict and conquest.

We may console ourselves with the thought that we have the atom bomb or that we are building the hydrogen bomb; but I am sure we are going to have more to reckon with than that when we face the anti-Christian enemies of the world. They are already in control of perhaps half the population of the world. And we have some of them right within our own borders, in our institutions of learning, and even in some churches. They have to an alarming extent sown the seed of unbelief, of distrust of our Government, of truth, and of righteousness.

In a daily newspaper was a letter written to God by a college student; he was asking the reason for the fear, the terrible outlook, the prospect that his parents and his loved ones might be destroyed by an atomic bomb. The answer is in the Word of God. In Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, we read a description of what we can expect in this world. The Prophet realized that destruction and havoc would be wrought by the kings of the north, Gog and Magog, Russia and the northern kingdoms coming through into the Holy Land among His people for the purpose of destruction.

But in the thirty-ninth chapter we read what God spoke:

"And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity."

Sin and Captivity

God said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Christian America, for its iniquity, may go into captivity.

"Because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword" (Ezekiel 39:23).

Righteousness does exalt a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Let us remember that if our land falls into captivity it will be because of the sins of the people.

"According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them.

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name" (Ezekiel 39:24, 25).

When will He have mercy? When we cry to God. I believe we will see the time when the people of this land will cry to God.

We are told of a time when the Antichrist will rule the world, when the day of mercy will be forever past, when men's hearts will be hardened against God and against His Christ. No form of violence will turn their thoughts toward Heaven. That time may be right at hand. Now is the time to take hold of God in effectual prayer and true repentance.

The international situation is tense. We were once called "calamity howlers" or "pessimists" if we called attention to the troubles in the world, but today people are thinking seriously. The men at the head of our nation are troubled, and many of their hearts are failing them for fear because of the things that are coming upon the earth. God said it would be so.

Signs Abound

There are signs on the earth everywhere. The Bible says there will be signs in the heavens, too. Wind and waves are rolling high in our day. The headlines in our papers have told of some of the most disastrous storms that have ever struck the Atlantic coast. Earthquakes are increasingly taking lives by the thousands.

Signs in the heavens, signs on earth, signs under the earth! You say you don't believe in signs? You had better wake up, if you are under the opiate of the devil. If he has put his hypodermic needle in you and lulled you to sleep in these hours of crisis, you had better bestir yourself before you drop into an eternal hell, a lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone forever and forever (Revelation 21:8).

The Way Out

There is only one way out of destruction, and that is to cry to God with godly sorrow for sin, in true repentance. Our only deliverance is in Christ. Calvary can cover all sins — but not until there is repentance. Without repentance it is impossible to experience the favor of God in our lives.

Awake, O sleeper! and call upon thy God before destruction overtakes you, before the storms of Judgment break, before everything that hell can turn loose is turned loose upon this old world.

More than 80 souls are plunged into eternity every minute. Consider how many that is in 24 hours. You may say that that does not affect you. You may be next! You may be, the very one the grim reaper is seeking for. Some drunken driver may be responsible for launching you out into eternity without a moment's warning. Should this fate be yours, are you prepared to meet the Lord?

Sudden Glory

What about the child of God? Sudden death is sudden glory for him. The Christian has a bright prospect. He says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Fifty million martyrs — martyrs for the truth — were valiant enough to say: "I will not recant. I will keep my integrity. I will be true to God. You can take my life, but, you cannot take my Christ." We might lose everything in this world, but we will gain everything in the world to come — which is infinitely better. Queen Mary summoned John Knox to her one day and threatened his life. He answered, "It matters little to me whether I bleach my bones on the sands of the desert, or whether the flesh rots in the earth beneath, so long as I know that I am true to my God, true to the message. He wants me to proclaim." He was a watchman on the wall. He cried out against sin in high places, without fear or tremor. He called sin what it was. He did not minimize the awful consequences of sin. I am persuaded that that is what God wants of His messengers today — to cry out against sin.

We read Luke's account of the Great Commission:

**"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" (Luke 24:46, 47).**

Luke was not a man of mediocre intelligence. He was a physician who had been converted to God, and left all to tell the story of the Cross and to proclaim God's message. Luke revealed the words of Jesus. That is what a watchman is supposed to do — reveal the words of Jesus. The true watchman, when he sees the danger coming, will sound the alarm; and those who heed the warning will escape. Those who are totally unconcerned and indifferent to the warning which the watchman of the Lord gives, or make light of it, will be caught and destroyed.

A Christian's Responsibility

It is time to bestir ourselves. We cannot sit placidly by and merely enjoy our salvation. We must be on

our knees in prayer, in supplication, prevailing with God for lost men and women. It is our responsibility to see that the story of the Cross, the story of the Gospel, is heralded out. We must be in communion with God ourselves, and have our hearts perfect before the Lord. Then He can use us for the salvation of others. The night is growing darker, and there is only anguish and destruction — final hell and damnation — ahead. for those who refuse the call of the Spirit. God help us to arise and do something about it!

In the Scriptures we read about those who revelled in sin and were brought to sudden judgment. Belshazzar, in the midst of a drunken orgy in the king's palace, saw his doom written upon the plaster of the wall. He could not read the language that was written, but he knew it was God's writing. His knees smote together; the joints of his loins were loosened. He was sober immediately. His soothsayers and magicians could not help him. When the man of God was called, he could read the writing: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. . . . Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." At that moment, when he thought he was safe, Darius the Mede was changing the course of the river that flowed through Babylon, and his armies marched along the old river bed into the city and captured this monarch who had boasted of his strength and security.

He had known better. His grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had been dethroned and reproved by God. Belshazzar knew this story, and yet he had turned from God. In the midst of his security, he was swept away.

Many people in this world who are apparently secure, self-sufficient, well satisfied with their own interests, are going to awaken to find that the enemy has dug trenches around them and is set in array against them. The enemy will swoop down in an hour when they think not.

Let us keep ourselves alert to our tremendous responsibility. Let us keep ourselves awake to the danger we see in the things that are damning the world — negligence, a dilatory spirit, and a refusal to accept responsibility, indifference to the warning that God, through His Word, faithfully gives to all people. He warns them to be saved and be ready, for "the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."