

The Lamp of Prophecy

or

Signs of the Times

by

H. A. Ironside, D.D., Litt.D.
Late Pastor, Moody Memorial Church, Chicago

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CHAPTER THREE

"THE KINGS OF THE EAST"

THERE ARE certain aspects of prophetic truth that in the very nature of things could not be understood clearly until the time of the end drew near. This principle is indicated in the angel's instruction to Daniel when he said:

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased . . . But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:4, 13).

Many things were revealed to Daniel that it was not the mind of GOD for him to understand fully in his own days nor could they be comprehended clearly in the early centuries of the Christian dispensation.

The Book of the Revelation, contrary to the Book of Daniel, was to be unsealed, and thus this unsealed book of New Testament prophecy has to a very large extent removed the seal from Daniel, the outstanding book of Old Testament prophecy. But even in Revelation there is much that it pleased GOD to conceal from general understanding until the end had drawn nigh.

Take, for instance, the prophecy relating to the kings of the East and their apparent onslaught upon the powers of the West. In Revelation 16:12-16, we read:

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue

Armageddon."

IDENTIFYING "THE KINGS OF THE EAST"

Who are "**the kings of the east**" here referred to?

They are clearly distinguished from the powers of the West animated by the unclean spirits that proceeded out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Armageddon is really the clashing of vast Eastern and Western armies contending for the possession of Palestine. This, I have no doubt, is all in the future and perhaps in the very near future, though not to take place until after the rapture of the church.

It has often been noticed that the trumpet and vial judgments [beginning in Revelation 8:6 and 16:1, respectively] run parallel, to a certain extent; that is, in each instance the same spheres or groups of people are referred to under the respective numbers. The first trumpet and the first vial are similar in character, and so on down through the lists. Now, if the prophecy of the sixth trumpet (Revelation 9:13 ff.) be compared with that of the sixth vial (Revelation 16:12-16), we may see that the kings of the East are the leaders of a tremendous Oriental army that will come down upon Palestine in the last days. For the sake of convenience, I quote the trumpet passage from Revelation 9:15-21, that it may be considered carefully in connection with what we have already read:

"And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

SYMBOLISM IN THE REVELATION

In reading such a passage as this, we must recognize the fact that we have before us a very highly figurative vision. The angel made known the unveiling to John in symbols: **"He sent and signified it by his angel"** (Revelation 1:1). **"Signified"** is literally "*sign-i-fied*" - that is, symbolized. If this key is kept in mind when one is reading the Apocalypse, it will save from many erroneous interpretations.

The symbolic picture, then, of the sixth trumpet judgment is that of a great army - on land and in air belching forth fire and smoke - coming down over the eastern steppes and plains of Asia, across the Euphrates into the land of Palestine, with the cry, "Asia for the Asiatics!"

Who will be the leader of this horde? The definite explanation of the sixth vial makes this clear. The way of the kings of the East is to be prepared by the drying up of the great river that was once the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. I am inclined to believe that this symbolizes the complete destruction of the Turkish power, which has acted as a buffer between the East and West for so long. Others think it refers to the actual drying up of the river itself, that river which was one of the four that of old went forth from Eden.

In either case, as a result of some great cataclysm, the way is to be effectually opened up for the onslaught of the kings of the East.

VIEWING THE EMPIRE OF THE RISING SUN

Who are these kings? It is not necessary to guess. The word for "East" is simply "sun-rising." The kings of the sun-rising! Japan has been known as the empire of the rising sun for a millennium.

The last three decades have brought this nation to the front in a marvelous way, but recent events have shown up her malignity, her ferocity, and her evident determination to dictate all the policies and dominate all the nations of the Far East. The puppet king of Manchukuo, possibly Japanese-controlled rulers in other northeastern Chinese territories, perhaps at last an alignment with China itself, and there for the great day of GOD Almighty - the Armageddon conflict.

The instructed believer in the inspired Word of GOD knows that the fierce winds of the great Tribulation will not be let loose on the earth till the church is raptured and the remnant of Israel sealed, but "coming events cast their shadows before," and we may will look with bated breath upon the amazing and truly horrible developments in the territory of the coming kings of the East.

The tocsin of doom is sounding. The yellow peril becomes more and more ominous. The preparation of the day of the Lord goes on apace.

Christian, life up your head. "**Your redemption draweth nigh.**"

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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