

Introduction

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THIS SPECIAL ISSUE is about the time of the end. The phrase “time of the end” is found in Daniel’s prophecy. In chapter 11 it states: “And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over” (v. 40). As is shown later on in this issue, the “push” by the king of the south can be related to the way the British pushed out the Turks from Palestine in 1917. The latter part of this verse relates to the Russian invasion of Israel, which is yet to take place.

Our time

We are therefore currently living at the time of the end. Later on Daniel is told: “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” (12:4). This description of the time of the end is a remarkable prophecy in itself, aptly summing up the world in which we live. With improvements in transport, the dramatic increase in knowledge and the development of communication technology such as the Internet, there is no doubt that we are living at the time of the end.

At some point during the period of the time of the end Christ will return to the earth and the resurrection will take place. This is spoken of at the beginning of Daniel 12, with Christ being referred to by the term “Michael”:

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (vv. 1-3).

Earlier in Daniel 11 it is written: “And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed” (v. 35). The sense in this verse is that the faithful are being purged in preparation for the time of the end, when they will stand before their Master to be judged. The time of the end is the time when redemption will take place. It is thus a time to be full of hope. We have seen events such as the eviction of the Turks from Palestine and the return of the Jews to the Land. The time of the end is well under way. The Lord Jesus said: “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Lk. 21:28). The more we see how “these things” are coming to pass the more we should be encouraged to lift up our heads, knowing that our redemption is drawing nigh.

Towards the end of the prophecy of Daniel it is written: “And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (12:9). It is only now, with hindsight, as we live through the time of the end, that the full force of these words can be understood. With the help of other revelations after Daniel, not least the book of Revelation, together with our vantage point in history, we can understand the words of Daniel in a way that was not possible for those living at the time of Daniel. The words are no longer sealed or closed up.

Structure

This Special Issue is structured as follows.

Following this introduction there is a series of short articles addressing some important general issues in relation to prophecy. These include a poignant article based on previous writings of the late Brother Jim Wood, Exhortation Editor of *The Testimony* until his sad falling asleep last year.

There then follows an ‘A to Z’ of key terms which relate to the time of the end. The terms include contemporary place names, relevant place names not in current usage, symbols and various other items. The main aim behind this section has been to provide an introductory guide

to help inform us about what we should be looking for at the time of the end with regard to particular places. Most of us have probably at some point found ourselves reading about a country in a newspaper, or listening to a radio or televised news report, and wondering, What does Bible prophecy say about this place? This resource is designed to provide an initial help to answer such a question.

The focus has been on the time of the end, but inevitably some history prior to the time of the end has been included. Where relevant, bullet points of key historical events are supplied at the end of entries. There is also some mention of events once Christ has established the Kingdom, but this is in passing, and it has not been the intention to look at these events in any detail. The present writer would normally indicate where the Name Yahweh occurs in quotations by placing it in square brackets after words 'LORD' or 'GOD'. It was felt, however, that, given the format of the 'A to Z', this would be too distracting to the reader, and so this practice has not been followed. Where an entry includes terms which themselves have an entry elsewhere in the glossary these terms are in **bold text**.

For any given entry in the 'A to Z', readers will appreciate that only an overview can be given. Readers who are new to Bible prophecy will, it is hoped, find the entries of use, but for those experienced in Bible prophecy specific entries of themselves may reveal little that was not previously known. However, it is hoped that one of the benefits of constructing an 'A to Z' of all key aspects of the time of the end will be that all readers will be encouraged by the way a consistent and coherent picture can be built up, despite the diversity of terms and prophecies that are included. This consistency and coherence is a testimony to the correctness of the interpretations that Christadelphians and others before them have long applied to Bible prophecy. Since each entry is intended to be reasonably sufficient in itself, there is a certain amount of repetition across different entries.

A range of resources has been used to help compile the 'A to Z'. In order not to overburden the text, references to such resources have been kept to a minimum. Where relevant, references are occasionally mentioned in the actual text of the entry. At the end of entries, numbers are given that relate to a list of Christadelphian writings found at the end of the 'A to Z'. This list is not exhaustive; for example, it does not include

any references to previous *Testimony* issues. A particular reference to a source does not imply that the entry in the 'A to Z' follows all the details of the interpretation given in that reference. The list simply gives a flavour of some of the Christadelphian works that have been used.

For general knowledge about places and historical events two main sources were used: the 1996 *Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia* Version 8.01, published by Grolier Electronic Publishing; and *The World Factbook*, produced by the CIA, found at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>. Images and maps used include some taken from previous *Testimony* issues and some new material as well. Credit for these is given as appropriate when new material is used. The author is grateful to the editors and other brethren and sisters who have given advice and help in relation to the 'A to Z'. Any errors found in the 'A to Z' are the responsibility of the author.

In order to help ensure consistency within the 'A to Z' it was decided to have only one author. As such, the 'A to Z' is like any other article published in *The Testimony*. The interpretations and views expressed in the 'A to Z' reflect the author's own views and, apart from fundamental doctrine, are not necessarily those of other editors.

Time periods

In 1 Chronicles it is said of the men of Issachar that they "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (12:32). At the time of the end it is just as important that we too understand the times and know what we have to do. Failure to know the times can lead to catastrophic results. For example, Jerusalem was destroyed because its people failed to understand the significance of the time in which they were living: "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Lk. 19:43,44).

In order to help us understand the times in which we live, a section on time periods that terminate in and around the time of the end is given at the end of the Special Issue. For each time period a brief explanation of how the time period is derived is provided, together with sug-

gested start dates, finish dates, and the events which took place at these times.

Conclusion

When considering world events as they unfold it is very easy to get things out of perspective and give more weight to particular events than is warranted. It is also easy to get discouraged when things do not develop as we anticipate, and we may even be tempted to discard correct interpretations in such circumstances. Some helpful words in this respect are found in Jeremiah 37. Some of the people were saying that the Chaldeans would leave the Land without attacking Jerusalem. In this context God says:

“Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire” (vv. 9,10).

Even if the Chaldeans were severely weakened, the prophecy would still be fulfilled, Jerusalem would still be attacked. The important thing was to remain faithful and to continue to believe the prophecies *whatever* might happen in the short term and however unlikely their fulfilment seemed. So, for example, Russia may have been weakened by the end of Communism, but this is not a reason for saying that it will not be able to invade Israel. Again, in Israel at the present time there is much violence, and the Israelis are building a wall to keep out suicide bombers, but this should not shake our faith in the prophecy that Israel will one day be “without walls, and having neither bars nor gates” (Ezek. 38:11) prior to the return of Christ.

We should therefore look at world events and take an interest in the things of which prophecy speaks. It is important that we have faith in God’s prophecies and remain faithful to correct interpretations, not allowing ourselves to be blown about by every shift and change in the affairs of the nations.

Watching when hope is deferred

Compiled from two articles by the late Brother Jim Wood*

THE DAY OF the watchman is today. Christ’s instruction is to be ready when he comes; but since “of that day and that hour knoweth no man” (Mk. 13:32), it means we have to be always ready—every hour of every day. His exhortation is, consequently, “Watch therefore” (Mt. 24:42), and he follows with the picture of the servant who says to himself, “My lord delayeth his coming” (v. 48), and who misuses his privileged position and squanders his lord’s time and money.

The outcome is: “the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of” (v. 50). Hence the constant need to be watching each day and hour, striving to ensure that the mind is not dulled by a surfeit of food and possessions, nor distracted by an abundance of pleasures and unprofitable activities.

So the day of the watchman is today. This is true in another sense too. This may be our last day; Jesus may come tonight, an accident may happen or ill-health strike so rapidly and unexpectedly that all plans for tomorrow will be

thwarted. If we believe his coming to be near, ought we not to live every day as though it were our last, making every effort to ensure that our determination and commitment have no opportunity to wane between now and his return? So, live today as though it were your last; the exhortation may not be new, but do we heed it daily? “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1); but, “Son, go work to day in my vineyard” (Mt. 21:28).

“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (Prov. 13:12). The postponing of things longed for disappoints. The continuing non-fulfilment of things expected exasperates. The repeated non-attainment of one’s desires grieves. Disappointment, exasperation and grief change our outlook on life, affect our judgement and may lead us to take action which later we regret and which may have unfortunate consequences for others.

* “The day of the watchman (1)”, Feb. 1982, p. 33; “A proverb a day . . . (19)”, Sept. 1997, p. 337.