

Signs of His Coming

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Study Given by W. D. Frazee—May 5,

One hundred eighty-two years ago on May 19 something happened. What was it? The dark day. Joel foretold it in the second chapter of his book. Peter quoted the prophecy in the second chapter of Acts. Jesus spoke of it in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. Mark and Luke wrote it down also. And John put it in the sixth chapter of Revelation. It is spoken of quite a number of times.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind" Revelation 6:12.

Jesus is seated on the mount of Olives. The disciples ask Him for signs of His coming. He mentioned a number.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" Matthew 24:19.

"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; 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. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" Luke 21:25-27.

It is interesting that all down through history there have been a few people looking for the fulfillment of God's prophecy. In 1762, before the first of those signs appeared, a man by the name of Edwin March wrote these words:

"If we could find the signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, particularly the sun darkened and the moon withholding her light, and the stars of heaven fallen, we should be ready perhaps to think of the coming of the Son of man just at hand. For upon the earth is distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring."

May 19, 1780, eighteen years later, the dark day came. I want to read two things from the secular magazine, *Coronet*, May 19, 1946. The man who wrote this is not a preacher, certainly not an Adventist. He is just writing from an editorial standpoint on some things that happened back there a hundred eighty-two years ago this morning. He calls his article, *America's First Black Friday*. He says:

"This dark day covered Main, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, parts of New York and Pennsylvania. It began about ten o'clock in the morning and lasted through the day and on into the next night. For many thousands of frightened people this deepest of night in midday could mean but one thing—the day of judgment. Churches were opened and hundreds of communities through the murky gloom came for a session of torches to the places of worship.

"Dr. Nathaniel Whittiker, pastor of the tabernacle church in Salem, Massachusetts arose to address the largest congregation his church had ever had. Only the sobs broke the hushed stillness in the candle-lit building.

"This darkness,' he said, 'is supernatural, sent by God. We may all be judged within the hour.'

"As the afternoon wore on the darkness still continued. Mr. R. M. Stevens in his book on the history of that time says, 'Upon a sheet of typed paper held within a few inches of the eye was invisible'" *Coronet, America's First Black Friday*, May 19, 1946.

As the time of ordinary sundown came, and it was still dark, people began to look in the east to see the rising moon. The moon was at its full the night before, and they were expecting the moon to come up early in the night. But as the hours came and went, there was no moon. What does Jesus say? "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light."

So for hours nobody slept. They were looking and wondering what it all meant. They wondered if they would ever see the sun again. Finally, sometime after midnight, the moon appeared as blood, just as we read in our first text (Revelation 6:12), thus fulfilling all the predictions of Joel, Peter, Jesus, and John. They were all fulfilled there within a twenty-four hour period as relates to the sun and moon.

A few years later, in 1808, Benjamin Gordon, who was president of trustees of Troy, New York, published this statement:

"Now let us examine if this is not the generation in which those signs were to take place. The sun was remarkably darkened in 1780, twenty-eight years ago last May. The

cows were coming home as they ordinary do at evening.
Candles had to be lighted in the homes."

He tells of the various experiences, including the moon turning to blood. After having traced the fulfillment of the sun and moon darkened, he immediately adds, "The next in course is the falling of the stars from heaven."

Just twenty-five years after that man wrote that article on the morning of November 13, 1833, in exact order Jesus hung out the third great sign in the heavens. All over North America, from two o'clock in the morning until daybreak, the entire heavens were filled with these flaming meteors, two hundred thousand in the air at once, and others following them like flakes of snow or drops of rain. Thus those three great signs were given.

It was at this time that William Miller and others were beginning to sound the note of the impending judgment and the coming of Jesus. These three great signs, fresh in the memory of their audiences, tended to confirm their faith in the preaching that Jesus' coming was near, even at the door.

I wonder if He is still near? Sure. He is much nearer than He was back there. And each time we pass one of these anniversaries and He has not appeared, instead of causing us to be lulled to sleep in complacency it should cause us to recall the fulfillment of prophecies and know that indeed Christ is near, even at the door.

I thought of this as I was coming here this morning and saw the signs that pointed the way to this little chapel. Where we leave the highway there is a little sign that says, The Little Brown Church, and an arrow points this way. We pass that sign and come to the corner where the road turns and a second sign is there. What does it say? The little Brown Church, and an arrow points this way. We come along this road and out there on the road is a third sign, The Little Brown Church. What do we expect when we see that third sign? We expect to get into the church right away. So we have come here this morning following those three signs.

One hundred eight-two years ago this morning our forefathers saw that first great sign, and said, The judgment hour is at hand. Jesus is about to come. Then the second sign appeared, the darkening of the moon. They said this is the fulfillment of prophecy, right in order. Then they said let's look for that third sign. They kept looking.

Sure enough, in 1833 they see the third sign, and they say, Now we know that Jesus is near, even at the door. Were they mistaken? No friends. They were not.

I would like to link two texts together—Matthew 24:32, 33 and Revelation 3:20. Both are talking about doors.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" Matthew 24:32,33.

Jesus says, In the springtime you see the leaves reaching out, and you know what? That spring is here and summer is near. So when you see the sun darkened, the moon darkened, and the falling stars, then know I am near, even at the doors.

How near is that? Suppose I see somebody coming along and they knock at the door. How near are they? They are as near as they are ever going to get until somebody opens the door. Is that right? And if that is so, there is no use to look to them to see how long it is going to take them to come in. The person to look to is where? Inside. That is what Jesus is talking about:

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" Revelation 3:20.

He has been standing there since the stars fell. He said He would. Oh friends, that God may give us a little glimpse of what it means to open that door. When the door is fully open He is coming. He wants to come. And all that stands between us and the coming of Jesus is a door, not a length of time.

You ask me, Brother Frazee, how long do you think it will be before He comes? Ah friends, the question is, How long will it be before the door is open. It isn't a matter of some more signs taking place in the heavens. No. We have passed the signs. He is at the door. Will we let Him in?

This morning I would like to have us think of what that means to us individually. Is Jesus in your heart or isn't He? Is Christ living in your heart this morning?

Somebody may wish they knew. All right. He says if you will open the door He will come in. Let's see what He brings when He comes.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" John 1:12.

Do you believe in Jesus? This says if you believe Him, and receive Him, He gives you power to become the sons of God.

How many of us believe in electricity? All of us do. But there are people who believe in electricity who don't have any power. There are people who believe in electricity who still light their houses with kerosene lamps, and carry water in a pail. They know there is such a thing as electricity that could bring the water in under pressure and light the house, run a washing machine, and cook the food. They believe in it. They believe it could be done. They believe it is happening for other people. But they don't have any. Why not? They believe, but they haven't received.

You may believe that Jesus lives. You may believe He died for you. But this says that as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.

It is a wonderful thing when Jesus stands at the door and knocks and you say, All right Lord, come in and bring everything you have with you to help me and bless me and give me victory over sin. That is the only way.

The Devil is an interesting salesman. When he sees that we are about to let the heavenly Merchantman in and accept His advice, and let Him give us the gold and white raiment and eye salve, he tries to put us off. He tries to get us to delay the matter. He knows that as long as he delays us Christ is outside. If Christ is outside we lack the power. So the Devil suggests that there are certain things we ought to do first.

The truth of the matter is that the first thing we need is Jesus in order to help us do all those things. Let me illustrate it. Suppose I am sick. My wife says, I think we had better send for the doctor. I say, Well, I don't think you had better send for the doctor. I am not so bad. I think I will get all right.

A day or two goes along and I am feeling worse. My wife says, I think we really ought to send for the doctor. I say, Well, I feel so bad I would hate to have the doctor come. When I get over this then we can send for the doctor.

Wouldn't that be a foolish thing? If I need a doctor I need him now. Each of those two excuses eats the other up. But that is the way the Devil deals with human beings. He tells people, You are pretty good. You are coming along all right. Just keep doing a little better and you will come out all right. That is a lie of the Devil.

But when the Devil can't keep people from Christ that way, then he tells them, You are so bad and wicked that you will have to get over some of those habits first, and then make a decision. That is also a lie of the Devil.

The Devil doesn't care which of those lies you listen to, because either one keeps Jesus at the door. And the Devil knows that your only hope of help is by letting Jesus come in. Where? All the way into your heart.

I have a picture. I want to tell the story of the woman who made the picture. A number of years ago I was holding meetings in the city of San Hosea, California in a woman's club building. We were studying some of these wonderful prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

There was a woman who was studying the prophecies with us who was a statistical bookkeeper for the largest printing firm in that city. As she studied the prophecies she came to the conclusion that this was the Lord's message and that the Lord wanted her to accept it, give her heart to Jesus, keep the Sabbath, and get ready to meet the Savior. But she was afraid she would lose her job if she did that. What could she do? She was a widow, dependent on her daily work to earn a living.

Will God help people to keep the Sabbath even if it means losing their job? I have seen hundreds of people take their stand and face that test, and I have never seen one starve to death. My own father lost his job when he accepted the Sabbath.

We were in poor circumstances for some time as a result. But I am here today, and I thank God for a mother and father who stepped out to keep the Sabbath.

Well, this woman was face to face with this decision. What would she do? About that time she got word that her daughter was coming to visit her. Her daughter was in New York city studying in an art school. She had a great deal of artistic ability. She was studying so she could go to Hollywood and be a designer for the movies there. She had no particular interest in religion. She was a worldly girl.

Her mother thought, Oh my, I wonder what Audrey will think? I wonder what my daughter will say about my studying the Bible and thinking about keeping the Sabbath.

The daughter came. And when the daughter had listened to those studies for just a little while she said, Oh mother, I want to go with you in this thing.

The mother and daughter both gave their hearts to God to keep the Sabbath and go all the way with Jesus, be baptized and get ready for the coming of Christ.

We were having a class in which we were studying what it means to get ready for baptism. In this class I had a blackboard. I put the cross in the center of the blackboard. On one side I drew a slanting line toward the bottom of that cross. On the other side I drew a line coming up to the bottom of the cross. I was studying Romans 6.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"
Romans 6:3, 4.

I pointed out from this Scripture that first we are to die with Christ just like we were going to literally die. We say "goodbye" to sin. Then as Jesus was buried, we are buried in the waters of baptism as a sign that we accept the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus for us; also as a sign that we want to bury that old life. Then we believe that Jesus will raise us from that watery grave to walk in a new life with Him.

As I said, I had those two lines on the blackboard. Dead with Christ, buried with Christ, risen with Christ. As I studied with that class I pointed out that when we are baptized it is not to go down to the river and turn around and go home and live like we did before. That is a boundary river.

For instance, if you go down to Texas there is a river that flows for hundreds of miles between the United States and Mexico. What is the river? The Rio Grande. Suppose I am down in Mexico and want to come to the United States. What must I do? I must cross that river. I crossed it at El Paso once. I was in Mexico. I came and crossed the river, and I was where? In the United States. There is no way to get from Mexico to the United States without crossing that river.

But if I had just gone down into the river and turned around and gone back the other way I would still have been in Mexico. Getting into the river would never have gotten me into the United States.

God intends that every soul that is baptized shall go down into the water as a sign of two things. That they have left the old and are starting the new, and they are saying goodbye to the world and entering a life with Jesus.

As I finished that word picture that daughter sat there in that class, and in her mind it began to form a picture. She went home and drew it out. Later she made a larger picture and gave it to me.

She drew a cross in the middle. She drew a river flowing down. Reflected in the river is the cross. Why? Because the river of baptism reflects the death of Jesus. We are buried in the likeness of His death. That is the death of the cross. He died for us. Now we give up everything for Him. On one side she drew a dark city with its artificial lights. There was the life of sin going on. She drew some people. What are they doing? They are leaving that old life and coming down by the river. Why? She drew on the other side a new city. It is the New Jerusalem, the pearly white city with its streets of gold and walls of jasper where Jesus reigns. They see it. They want to leave this old world of sin. They want to be citizens of that city of light. They want to be forever with Jesus.

But as they come down there is a river they must cross. It is the boundary river. It is the river of separation. It is the river where we say goodbye to one life and say good morning to another life. This is the river where we say we are finished with sin and the world. This is the river where we put our hand in the hand of Jesus and say, Lord, take my hand and go with me up that rugged way.

Do you think that when a man is baptized and starts up that narrow, rocky trail that he might stumble and fall? Could it happen? Oh, yes. Would that mean that he is back here in the world of sin? No.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" 1 John 2:1, 2.

If along the way you have stumbled and fallen, right there get down on your knees and ask God to forgive you. Let Jesus take your hand and lift you up and take you on your way rejoicing. That is the way to walk the Christian way.

We don't need to fall. If we do, there is just one way to get up and go on. But if a man falls and turns around and leaves this life and goes back to that old life of sin and turns his back on God and the church, he needs to cross the river again. He needs to repent and do his first works. He needs to start just where he started before and climb with Jesus one step after the other to the city of God. Thank God it can be done.

I wonder what the Lord would like to have us do about this? I can tell you that to everyone who has made this decision and given our hearts to Jesus this occasion should be a renewal of our vows of baptism that we are going all the way with Jesus. Don't you think so?

Suppose I had never crossed that river. Suppose I crossed it once, but I am back into the enemy's land. How long would it take me waiting on the bank of this river to get across? A day? A month? A year? Ten years?

I want to tell you a true experience. Many years ago, before many of you here were born, there was a dear man who came to my meeting in a city where I was holding evangelistic services. His wife had accepted this message. That dear man came to those meetings night after night. I visited with him in his home again and again. He was always going to do it. I don't think that once in his life he ever decided not to do it. But he kept putting it off. Time after time I made an appeal to him, but when I left that city he had not made his decision.

A number of years later I came back. Again I made an appeal, but he didn't do it. The last time I went to that city I went to visit that man. He was very old. I made an appeal to him again. He was still thinking about doing it, but his mind doesn't function as it once did. He had a stroke and was just about gone. I could weep if it would do any good as I think that for twenty-five years that dear man has been waiting on the brink of the river. The chances are that he will never get across. I am afraid he has waited too long.

Don't misunderstand me. God is ready to take him at the eleventh hour. But I am afraid that he has waited so long that there is not enough left of his mind to make a decision. It is one of the saddest things I know of.

In that same city there was another man who came to my meetings. He was the manager of a large commercial enterprise. His wife too as a member of the church.

On night I went to that man's home. I make an appeal to him. His wife had been praying for him for many years. That evening he gave his heart to God. Some time later I had the joy of leading him down into the watery grave and baptizing him. He came forth to newness of life. He has been serving God ever since. For twenty-five years he has been rejoicing in this light. He eventually became the manager of a sanitarium. He is still working for God.

The other night he was passing through this part of the country. I had not seen him for many years. He is a great big fellow. I threw my arms around him and said, "Brother, you are my boy even if you are bigger than I am."

What made the difference between those two men. Just one thing. One made a decision, the other didn't. That's all.

What is needed? A decision. I stand at the door and knock. If anybody hears Me and opens the door I will come in.

Somebody says, I am not ready.

Of course you are not. It is Jesus' work to get you ready. You can camp by that river for ten or twenty years and you will never be ready.

I remember a baptismal service we were preparing for, and a woman had decided, but the Devil was trying to get her to reconsider. One night she said to me, "Brother Frazee, I am afraid I had better not be baptized. I am afraid I am not good enough to belong to your church."

I said to her, "Bless your heart, we don't baptize good people."

"You don't?"

"No. We baptize bad people. People who know they are so bad that they live for just one thing, and that is to be buried and put out of sight. They know they are bad enough that they are willing to lay that old life down at the feet of Jesus and believe that God will give them power to live a new life in Christ."

Thank God, she went ahead. And I don't care what the Devil's argument is this morning, I say to you, look toward the river. Get ready to cross into Immanuel's land.

Somebody says, I am afraid I don't know enough.

Just when would you know enough to know you knew enough? How would you know what enough is? God has not left that responsibility with you. That is with the church and the ministry. God has said to His church, Go and teach and baptize those who believe. Part of the work of the church and the ministry is to make sure that you understand what you need to understand before you are baptized. And I can assure you that when you come to the true church of Christ which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ you come to a church that will be careful to instruct you, and will not baptize you until you are ready.

Your part is to be willing. Your part is to say, Oh Lord, I want to go all the way.

Baptism is like the marriage ceremony. They stand at the altar, and the minister says to the young man, Will you leave every other girl? Will you be true to this one? He says, I will. The minister says to the young woman, will you be true to this young man? She says, I will. He places his hands upon their joined hands and says, God has joined you together. Let nobody put you asunder.

So in baptism there is a sealing of the union of your soul with Christ. Before men and angels you say, I leave everything to be true to Jesus forever. I believe He has made that decision for me. We are sealed forever.

But before two people are married they are engaged. There is a time after the decision is made that they are getting ready for the great event.

I tell you, this morning is the hour of decision. It is not the hour of marriage, but it is the hour of engagement. If there is a soul here this morning who has not yet made your engagement with Jesus Christ, He has proposed to you. The great lover of your soul has said, Will you be Mine? I am yours. I left everything in this universe for you.

How long will you keep Him waiting at the door?

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