

Two Minute Warning II

Valley Center October 13, 2007

Maybe you've seen a picture that is composed of just dots, and when you're close to the picture you can't really make out what it is, but when you step back and look at the page from a distance, the features of the picture become clear. It is that "big picture perspective" that I want to share with you in discussing these ten great signs which came to view between 1750 and 1850. We might call these "God's Decathlon Of Signs" or that period of time the "Century Of Signs." Like the ten day of blowing of trumpets before the arrival of Yom Kippur, these were God's "wake up call" to planet earth to get ready for His coming.

Remember also that when we step back and look at the big picture, even though these events happened years ago from our point of view, still what the Bible calls the "time of the end" is 2/60 of a one-hour clock, in which each century represents a minute. We are now living in the "two minute warning" of this earth's history. And remember too that it's probable that God would have ended it all before now, if His people had exercised faith in His promises. After all, it's only eleven days journey from Mt. Sinai to the borders of Canaan, but those eleven days stretched into forty years because of unbelief. Deuteronomy 1:2; Hebrews 3:19.

So last week we reviewed the first of these ten signs, the Great Lisbon Earthquake of November 1, 1755, which fulfilled the prophecy of Revelation 6:12. Its quake and after shocks, coupled with three tsunamis and a five day fire destroyed about 40% of Lisbon's population and 85% of its buildings, plus affected a large portion of the globe. Those acquainted with Bible prophecy knew God's Word had come true.

Next, the second "dot" on our 100 year timeline, there was the birth of America in 1776, the beast that came up out of the "earth" (a relatively unpopulated area) and had horns like a "lamb" (it presented itself as a Christian entity) but later spoke like a "dragon". This nation, with its twin principles of civil and religious liberty, came on the scene just as another "beast" was declining, which is what we'll talk about today.

Then we noticed two events, numbers three and four on our list that came to pass in 1780. The Great Dark Day of May 19, followed by a moon which had the appearance of blood, was predicted in

Revelation 6:12, as well as 5 other places in the Bible (Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; Matthew 24:29; Acts 2:20).

Now today we want to review numbers 5-7 on our list, which are the French Revolution in 1793, the close of the 1260 year period in 1798, and the falling of the stars in 1833. Let's think of number 6, the close of the 1260 years first.

God in His great mercy has revealed information so that we can be aware of His plans, but *at the same time*, not be discouraged concerning long time periods. How would you do that, if you were writing the prophecies? For our benefit, because He knows we are so prone to put things off, God has always held out His coming as being "near." At the same time, we recognize now that in His providence the Second Advent would not take place immediately after Christ's ascension to heaven. Eve thought her first born was to be the promised Messiah, but it would be 4,000 years till Jesus was born. It was similar with respect to His Second Coming. Looking back, with 20/20 hindsight, we recall the advice in His parables about the "delay" of the Bridegroom. We recall the counsel of Paul that "that Day will not come unless the falling away (our word "apostasy" comes directly from the Greek word used here) comes first." II Thessalonians 2:3.

In keeping with His character of love, in giving these prophetic disclosures, God "encoded" *time* in a unique way, so that those living before or at the beginning stages of those periods wouldn't be discouraged and lapse into procrastination, but that those living on the other side of the period could have the confidence in prophecy fulfilled. This was entirely consistent with the usage of symbols such as animals to represent kingdoms and powers as we find in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. If symbols are used to represent nations, why not use time also in a symbolic way? So He did, and available to the diligent Bible student are the clues to decipher His prophetic codes, including one that tells us that in symbolic prophecy a *day is equal to a literal year*. Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6.

Seven different occasions, and by three different methods, God foretold this "apostasy" referred to by Paul, twice in Daniel's prophecies (Daniel 7:25; 12:7) and five times in Revelation (11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). It is referred to as 1260 days, forty two months and "a time, times and half a time" which, given the similarity of context, logically means 3 ½ years. These three are equivalent time periods, and given the yardstick of a "day for a year in symbolic prophecy,"

represent the 1260 year period of papal domination that lasted from 538 A. D. through 1798.

Whenever we discuss these matters, it is appropriate to point out the difference between the "system" of the papacy and individual believers. God is speaking about the "system". Without question there were individuals in the Catholic Communion who loved and served Jesus, but the Church as a whole had turned her back on Christ, His Word and His truth.

What was this "falling away" that Paul was talking about? After His death, the Christian Church went forward conquering in the early centuries, but soon allowed the diluting influence of compromise with paganism to water down her pure doctrines. The Church of the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church, replaced the precious truths of God, given by Christ to His disciples, with other teachings, which tended to obscure the beauty of the Gospel and distort the picture of a loving God. At the same time she restricted the availability of the Scriptures and assumed the role of "conscience guide" in a way that God never intended. She took it upon herself to coerce obedience on pain of persecution and death.

How did she get so much power? A few centuries after Christ's death, the civil government of Rome found itself in great decline and moved the seat of her operation to Constantinople. This left a "vacuum" which was filled by the Church. The bishop of the Church of Rome assumed the powers abdicated by the Roman emperors, and was bolstered by two important things: an edict pronounced by the Emperor Justinian in 533 A. D., (within Justinian's famous "code") giving the Bishop of Rome unprecedented powers, and by Justinian's *army* successfully driving away the Church's enemies, who gave up the conflict in 538. From that time on, the Church saw little resistance in inflicting her policies.

Slowly but surely the powers and the claims of the popes grew, till she was unrivaled in authority and unashamed in her boasts. Popes made statements of being equal to God, and assumed titles that belong only to Deity. Kings and princes bowed before their wishes. Those who dared to disagree suffered the flame or the sword. It is estimated that upwards of 60 million martyrs sealed their witness in blood at the hands of the papacy during those years. The notorious Inquisition is but one chapter in her bloody past. How Satan delighted to turn men's minds away from God's Book, and institute beliefs and

practices that not only destroyed the bodies of those who dissented, but the faith of many of those who remained!

Christ spoke these words with respect to this lengthy period of trial: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened." Matthew 24:21, 22.

This great "tribulation," was unprecedented and unequalled in its **duration**. True to His words, some time after the arrival of the Protestant Reformation and before the official close of the 1260 year prophetic period, the fires of persecution finally died out. That is why Jesus continued to say, "Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days the **sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from heaven.**" Matthew 24:29. All of this makes perfect sense when seeing this "tribulation" as representing the period of papal domination. Further down the stream of time would come another "time of trouble such as never was" which would be unequalled in its **intensity**. Daniel 12:1.

Identification of the Roman Catholic Church as the power that ruled during this period is inescapable after studying the clues given in the Bible. Reformers like Luther and others built their pulpits on the sure understanding of these prophetic symbols as representing the papacy. The voice of the Reformation would be essentially unanimous in their interpretation of these prophecies. The beast brought to view which would bear sway would, according to the prophecies of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13:

Rise at a time when Civil Rome declined. It was the horn that "grew from" the fourth beast of Daniel 7, being Civil Rome.

Speak great words of blasphemy. In her claims to equality with God and the authority to forgive sin, the papacy has met the criteria of biblical blasphemy. Luke 5:21; John 10:33.

Attempt to change God's law. The papacy has removed the second commandment, changed the fourth (the day of worship from God's Sabbath to Sunday) and split the 10th. Persecute those who disagreed with her.

Continue for a period of 1260 years, from 538 A. D. to 1798.

Experience a serious set back at the close of that period.

This power would be identified in Scripture under the symbols of:

A "little horn" which grew to become great in Daniel 7.

An "antichrist," that is, one who attempts to "take the place of" Christ in I John 2:18.

A "leopard like" beast in Revelation 13, which repeats many of the features of Daniel 7.

History confirms these as facts. We follow in the pathway of those mighty preachers of the Reformation who were fearless in their pointing out the prophetic fulfillments. The 1260 years of prophecy came to their conclusion when in 1798 Pope Pius VI was captured and died in exile. We are now able to see the accurate fulfillment of Revelation 13:10, which foretold the decline of the papacy in the end of the 18th Century, and Revelation 13:11, which predicted the rise of America about the same time. It should also be noted that the conclusion of this 1260 year time period marked the beginning of what the Bible calls the "time of the end." Daniel 12:4-7.

Let's now go back to #5, the French Revolution and see how this event fulfilled Scripture. Actually, the "Reign of Terror" and the decline of the papacy are closely related, not just in time but also their causal relationship and it would be a mistake to discuss one without the other.

History also tells us that the setback of the papacy was engineered by France. The French Revolutionary government advised Napoleon, whose armies had been achieving great success in Italy, "there is one thing even more essential to the attainment of the end desired, and that is to destroy, if possible, the center of unity of the Roman Church." (A. Aulard, Christianity and the French Revolution, p. 158.) Napoleon then sent his general Berthier to carry out these instructions, and the pope was taken captive. It was thought by many that the day of papal influence would never return. According to the prophecy, he who had led into captivity would himself be led into captivity. Revelation 13:10.

The revolution in France is pictured in Revelation 11. In highly figurative language this chapter features the sad experience of the Scriptures during the Middle Ages, under the symbols of two "witnesses," that is, the Old and New Testaments, which testify of God's truth. Concerning the Scriptures, Jesus said "they **testify** (from the same word as "witness" in Revelation 11) of Me." John 5:39. These are the "two olive trees" (because the olive tree provided the oil for burning) and "two lampstands" (because the Scriptures are God's

medium of giving us light). "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105. Later in this chapter the Scriptures are personified by "Moses" and "Elijah", two of God's prominent prophets. Elijah's ministry, calling fire from heaven and closing the skies to rain is highlighted in verses 5 and 6, and Moses' work, turning waters to blood, is referred to in verse 6.

These "witnesses," the Old and New Testament, are said to have prophesied in "sackcloth," during the Middle Ages, because the Scriptures were withheld from the people, and His truth obscured. In the thirteenth century Pope Gregory and the Council of Toulouse declared, "We prohibit laymen possessing copies of the Old and New Testament. We forbid them most severely to have the above books in the popular vernacular."

Later, in very symbolic language, these "witnesses" are said to have been "slain" by a beast that comes from a bottomless pit, and their bodies are strewn in the great city called "spiritually" Sodom, Egypt and Jerusalem. Revelation 11:7, 8. What does all this mean?

Of all the countries which suffered under the domination of the papacy's rule, France suffered the most. Her purses were impoverished as her wealth and resources flowed southward to construct the basilicas and cathedrals of Rome. For centuries she languished under the authoritarian domination exercised by papal sovereigns. Those who challenged her authority, the Albigenses and Huguenots, were persecuted and had to flee for their safety. Not all escaped. When the light of the Reformation came, France fought against the Scriptures, and truth made but little headway.

At the same time, opulence and corruption ruled the aristocracy of France. While the kings sat in splendor, the populace as a whole scratched and scraped out a living to survive. When the people revolted against the excesses of the French nobility, they sought to overturn everything connected with the previous regime. Religion must go.

So began the so-called "Reign of Terror," the French Revolution in 1793. It was a classic case of "throwing the baby out with the bathwater." The French parliament passed laws denouncing and denying God. Sir Walter Scott wrote, "The world for the first time heard an assembly of men, born and educated in civilization, and assuming the right to govern one of the finest of the European nations, uplift their united voice to deny the most solemn truth which man's

soul receives, and renounce unanimously the belief and worship of a Deity." (Scott, Life Of Napoleon, vol 1, ch. 17).

"France is the only nation in the world concerning which the authentic record survives, that as a nation she lifted her hand in open rebellion against the Author of the universe. Plenty of blasphemers, plenty of infidels, there have been and still continue to be, in England, Germany, Spain, and elsewhere; but France stands apart in the world's history as the single state which, by the decree of her Legislative Assembly pronounced that there was no God, and of which the entire population of the capital, and a vast majority elsewhere, women as well as men, danced and sang with joy in accepting the announcement." ("Blackwood's Magazine", November, 1870.)

In these events France replicated (Revelation 11:8) the *Atheism* of **Egypt**, whose pharaoh declared "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?" Exodus 5:2. The Frenchman Voltaire stated "I am weary of hearing people repeat that twelve men established the Christian religion. I will prove that one man may suffice to overthrow it." *Immorality* of **Sodom** in her profligacy and removal from the institution of marriage any sacredness. *Hatred against Christ* demonstrated by **Jerusalem** of old by the persecution of His followers and the treading of His truths.

A leading cry of the Revolution was "Crush the Wretch," referring to Christ. The worship of God was outlawed by the National Assembly. Bibles were confiscated and destroyed. The institutions of the Bible, including baptism, communion, marriage and the seven-day week were abolished. In its place, a short lived ten-day "week" was inaugurated, with the tenth day being devoted to revelry and gluttony. In a historic assembly, a former priest publicly recanted his belief in God, declaring his intention to devote himself henceforth to the worship of liberty, equality, virtue and morality. Then he laid his vestments on a table, receiving a welcoming embrace from the president of the Convention (see Great Controversy, p. 274.).

From that, it was but a short step to blatant idolatry, as Reason was declared to be the deity, and a woman was brought into the Assembly to represent the Goddess of Reason. With great pomp she was unveiled before the delegates, who then pledged their homage to her. The announcement was made, "Mortals, cease to tremble before

the powerless thunders of a God whom your fears have created. Henceforth acknowledge no divinity but Reason. I offer you its noblest and purest image; if you must have idols, sacrifice only to such as this." (Alison, History Of The French Revolution.) She was then conveyed to the Cathedral of Notre Dame and installed on the high altar as the new deity.

We're approaching dangerously close to that pinnacle of blasphemy. Reports John-Henry Western of Life-Site.com: "Last Sunday, October 7, San Francisco Archbishop George Niederauer said Mass at a Catholic Church in the heart of the gay Castro district. Most Holy Redeemer Parish has a lamentable reputation of having caved in to demands of homosexual activists. One group of homosexual activists which until recently operated regularly out of the parish was called "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence", men who wear makeup and dress as Catholic nuns. Archbishop Niederauer was filmed giving two members of this group Holy Communion on Sunday." The "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence", have a motto which is "go and sin some more."

Back to the French Revolution, soon afterward, public burnings of Bibles and other sacred literature displayed their hatred for God's Word. Mobs exulted and held parties in celebration of the removal of that Voice of conscience which had bothered them. The "witnesses" were martyred (our word "martyr" comes directly from the word "witness" in Greek) in the streets of Paris. The symbols of Revelation were fulfilled in a remarkable way.

Not everyone might connect the dots between this outrage and the suppression and betrayal of the Scriptures the papacy had sponsored for centuries, but in reality the events went together as hand and glove. When, under the guidance of Satan the Bible had been withheld or twisted by popes and prelates, it should not have been surprising that this national denial would result. Satan was the engineer of both, and both policies suited his plan. The sword of persecution raised against the Protestants was replaced by the guillotine prepared for the priests. The blood of Protestant martyrs that had bathed the streets of Paris was replaced by the blood of Catholic prelates. Wherever in the world the Scriptures have reigned, light, justice, prosperity and advancement in *every part of learning* has been the result. Wherever the Bible has been suppressed, darkness and blight have followed. It is ***no coincidence*** that the Renaissance (enlightenment in many branches of intellect) and the Reformation (enlightenment specifically in spiritual matters) were simultaneous.

However, not so long afterward the Revolution the Bible became honored. Bible Societies were formed in the early 19th Century. Scriptures were translated into languages and dialects so that all could read the Bible in their own tongue. Missionary movements spread the Word around the world. In the figurative language of Revelation 11, the Witnesses were resurrected and given a place of honor in heaven. From our "wide-angle lens view," we see the dates 1793 and 1798 as meaningful markers on the road of prophecy.

Now let's move on to number 7. As we noted earlier, many times God had foretold that there would be signs in the sun, moon and stars. He alluded to this at the Creation. Genesis 1:14. It's interesting to see how the order of expression was accurately followed by the order of fulfillment. First there was the Great Dark Day, followed by moon having the appearance of blood on May 19, 1780, then about a half-century after that was the remarkable star shower of November 13, 1833.

There had been occasions of "shooting stars" prior to and after this event, but none equaled the impact of this one. It was so bright that a newspaper could be read on the street. One writer says, "For nearly four hours the sky was literally ablaze." (Peter A. Millman, "The Falling of the Stars," *The Telescope*, 7 (May-June, 1940) 57. Men thought the end of the world had come.

That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars which has ever been recorded; "the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion. No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class in the community, or such dread and alarm by another." "Its sublimity and awful beauty still linger in many minds. . . . Never did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell toward the earth; east, west, north, and south, it was the same. In a word, the whole heavens seemed in motion. . . . The display, as described in Professor Silliman's journal, was seen all over North America. . . . From two o'clock until broad daylight, the sky being perfectly serene and cloudless, an incessant play of dazzlingly brilliant luminosities was kept up in the whole heavens."

"No language indeed can come up to the splendor of that magnificent display; no one who did not witness it can form an adequate conception of its glory. It seemed as if the whole starry heavens had congregated at one point near the zenith, and were

simultaneously shooting forth, with the velocity of lightning, to every part of the horizon; and yet they were not exhausted--thousands swiftly followed in the track of thousands, as if created for the occasion." "A more correct picture of a fig-tree casting its figs when blown by a mighty wind, it is not possible to behold."

On the day following its appearance, Henry Dana Ward wrote thus of the wonderful phenomenon: "No philosopher or scholar has told or recorded an event, I suppose, like that of yesterday morning. A prophet eighteen hundred years ago foretold it exactly, if we will be at the trouble of understanding stars falling to mean falling stars, in the only sense in which it is possible to be literally true."

Many, who witnessed the falling of the stars, looked upon it as a herald of the coming Judgment,--"an awful type, a sure forerunner, a merciful sign, of that great and dreadful day." Thus the attention of the people was directed to the fulfillment of prophecy, and many were led to give heed to the warning of the Second Advent.

An eyewitness, Elder Samuel Rogers wrote, "We had but little rest that night, for, before three o'clock in the morning, we were all aroused from our slumbers, making preparation for an early start. Some one, on looking out of the window, observed that it was almost broad daylight. 'That can not be,' another answered, 'For it is scarcely three o'clock.' 'I can't help what the clock says,' replied the first speaker, 'my eyes can not deceive me; it is almost broad daylight -- look for yourselves.'

After this little altercation, some one went to the door for the purpose of settling the question. Fortunately, there was not a cloud in the heavens; so by a glance, all was settled. I heard one of the children cry out, in a voice expressive of alarm: 'Come to the door, father, the world is surely coming to an end.' Another exclaimed: 'See! The whole heavens are on fire! All the stars are falling!' These cries brought us all into the open yard, to gaze upon the grandest and most beautiful scene my eyes have ever beheld." The seventh sign had come true!

It happened to me this week, while I was typing away on this sermon, somewhere around page three or four. Suddenly, without warning, the power shut off! Fortunately, it came on after only a few minutes, but those of you who do work on computers know what question immediately came to my mind! Why didn't I hit the "save" button before the power went off? When the power was restored, I

pulled the document up and ascertained what had been saved and what had been lost. If a voice from the sky had said, "The power's going to be shut off. Better save your work," of course I'd have been spared.

In seconds, the Lord sent like an arrow the lesson of that experience. The Voice from the sky has sent us warnings. We're looking at 10 outstanding, time dated prophetic fulfillments that should tell us things are coming to an end. Soon the sky will open and Jesus the King will come back. Are our lives secure in Him? Are we living in the consciousness of His return? Have we hit the "save" button in our hearts?