

Further Reading 2

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1. The Last Days and the Present Days

When Jesus was speaking to Peter of his fate, Peter asked him about John's future. Jesus replied, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" (John 21:22) Upon hearing this, the disciples thought Jesus would return during John's lifetime. Moreover, Jesus said to his disciples, "you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes" (Matt. 10:23) and "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16:28) Based on these sayings, the disciples and many Christians since have believed that Jesus would return during their lifetime. They have been constantly haunted by a sense of urgency that the Last Days are at hand. This is because they fail to grasp the fundamental meaning of the Last Days.

We can deduce that today is in fact the Last Days by examining the various circumstances of the present age. We can recognize in these circumstances the restoration of the three great blessings, which God has purposed in His providence of restoration. As Jesus said:

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. - Matt. 24:32-33

SIGNS OF THE RESTORATION OF THE FIRST BLESSING

The first blessing God gave to Adam and Eve was perfection of individual character. In the modern world, there are various phenomena which indicate that God's providence to restore fallen people to their original state as perfected individuals is near its zenith.

First, we can observe that the spirituality of fallen people is being restored. We have already explained that when a person reaches perfection, he becomes

completely one with God in heart and is able to build true relationships with others. Adam and Eve, though not quite perfect, were able to converse with God. When they fell from this state, they caused their descendants also to sink into ignorance of and insensibility to God. Gradually, the spirituality of fallen people has been rehabilitated as they enjoy the merit of the age in the providence of restoration. In the Last Days, therefore, many faithful believers will acquire the ability to communicate with God, as was prophesied in the Bible:

In the last days . . . I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. - Acts 2:17

As we witness a profusion of spiritual phenomena taking place all around us, we can discern that the present era is the Last Days. We are entering an era when we can reach individual perfection and restore the first blessing of God.

A second sign that the first blessing is being restored in the present era can be seen in the historical trend toward the recovery of the freedom of the original mind. Due to the Fall, our original mind was shackled under the yoke of Satan, and we lost the freedom to come before God. In the present era, as people struggle for freedom at the cost of their lives, the zeal to gain true freedom has reached its height. This is an indication that we are now entering a new era in which we can attain individual perfection, long denied by Satan, and freely go before God.

A third sign of the renewal of the first blessing is the restoration of true human value. From the horizontal perspective, every person possesses equal value, but that does not do justice to his true worth. From the vertical perspective of Heaven, each individual possesses the loftiest cosmic value. Human beings lost their original value because of the Fall. In the present era, as democratic ideals have flourished, people have been promoting the emancipation of slaves, the freedom of oppressed racial minorities, and the independence of small and weak nations. They are advocating human rights and equality between the sexes and among all peoples. More than ever before, people are zealously uplifting the value of the individual toward its original value. This demonstrates that we have arrived at the threshold of the Last Days, when fallen people can restore the first blessing of God.

A fourth sign that the first blessing is being renewed in the present age is the restoration of original, true love in fallen people. The world which has realized the ideal of God will be in the image of a perfected individual. Every person in that world is united with God vertically, and this forms the basis upon which they can naturally live in harmony with each other horizontally. Solidarity and

empathy are attained only when people join together in the love of God. Due to the Fall, the vertical bond of love between God and people was broken, and this in turn caused the horizontal love among them to be severed. As a result, human history became one of perpetual conflict. In the present era, however, the philosophy of universal love has become widespread, and people are increasingly seeking for true, original love. This is more evidence that the present time is the eve of the Last Days, when we can restore God's first blessing and reach perfection of individual character grounded in the love of God.

SIGNS OF THE RESTORATION OF THE SECOND BLESSING

God's second blessing was for Adam and Eve to attain True Parenthood and bear and raise good children, forming a family, society and world where goodness reigns. However, Adam and Eve fell and became evil parents multiplying evil children; their descendants (all humanity) formed a world oppressed by evil. Ever since, God has been conducting a twofold providence, internal and external, to restore the sovereignty of goodness.

God has founded religions and worked through them to elevate people's spirituality by internally purifying people of satanic elements. At the same time, God has been cutting off Satan's influence externally through conflicts and wars. By separating Satan both internally and externally, the providence of restoration has been raising up good children who will one day be able to serve Christ when he comes as the True Parent. In this way, human history has been paving the way for the restoration of God's second blessing. Accordingly, we can deduce that the present era is the Last Days by examining the signs of the internal and external restoration of God's sovereignty. These are manifested as trends in the history of the development of cultural spheres and in the history of the rise and fall of nations, both of which are rooted in religion.

First, let us investigate how the history of the development of cultural spheres has progressed to the point when, in the present era, we have arrived at the threshold of the Last Days. God sends prophets and saints to fallen humanity to found religions. He works to develop them through the original minds of those who seek the good. In this way, God builds up cultural spheres based upon religions. Although many cultural spheres have emerged in the course of history, with the passage of time most of them either merged with or were absorbed by others. In the present age, we see a clear trend toward the formation of one global cultural sphere based on Christian ideals. As this trend progresses, all races and peoples are increasingly coming to stand side by side as brothers and sisters under the love and guidance of Jesus Christ, thereby restoring the second blessing of God.

The main distinction between Christianity and other religions is that its purpose is to receive and honor the True Parents of humanity, through whom all people can be reborn as good children. In this way, Christianity should renew the world as the one global family which God purposed from the time of creation. This makes Christianity the central religion with the mission to fulfill the goal of the providence of restoration. In the present era, the world has been coalescing into one cultural sphere based on Christian ideals. As the world has been greatly influenced by the teachings of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who are the True Parents of humankind, the way has been opened for all people to become godly children. This trend is evidence that God's second blessing is being restored. Thus, we can conclude with certainty that the present age is the Last Days.

Next, let us investigate how the history of the rise and fall of nations has been progressing toward the goal of restoring the sovereignty of good, thereby leading us into the Last Days. It is an error brought about by ignorance of the fundamental providence of God to regard the cause of struggles and wars as mere conflicts of interests and contests between ideologies. Humankind has suffered through a sinful history ever since the first human ancestors fell under the subjugation of Satan. However, as long as God's purpose of creation still stands, the purpose of this history must be to cut our ties with Satan and restore God's kingdom. If there were no wars or divisions in this fallen world, then the sovereignty of evil would continue forever and the world would never be restored. Therefore, God has worked His providence to restore the heavenly sovereignty by degrees. He sends prophets and saints to the fallen world to found religions and raise the level of morality. He establishes governments with higher standards of goodness which come to oppose and destroy regimes with lower standards of goodness. To fulfill the providence of restoration, therefore, conflicts and wars are unavoidable.

To summarize some of these issues, many of which will be treated more thoroughly in Part 2, human history has progressed through the providential course of restoration through indemnity. Although there have been times when evil seemed to prevail, in the end the relatively evil social and political forces declined and were absorbed by the more godly forces. The wars which have shaped the rise and fall of nations are thus unavoidable during the course of the providence to re-establish the reign of good.

For example, in the Bible God ordered the Israelites to destroy the seven tribes of Canaan. When Saul disobeyed Him, leaving some of the Amalekites alive with their cattle, God severely punished him. (1 Sam. 15:18-23) While on that occasion God commanded the Israelites to destroy the Gentiles, at another time, when the Israelites of the northern kingdom turned to evil, God delivered them into the hands of the Assyrians. (2 Kings 17:23) We must understand that God's only intention by these events was to obliterate the sovereignty of evil

and restore the sovereignty of good. Therefore, fights between individuals within the same good sovereignty on the side of God are evil, because they can weaken and even cause the disintegration of the good sovereignty itself. On the other hand, wars conducted by a good sovereignty to destroy an evil sovereignty are good in that they further the fulfillment of the providence of restoration.

The history of conflicts among nations has served the purpose of cutting off Satan's ties to humankind. History has progressed to the point where God's side can now reclaim territories and wealth all over the world. The providence to reclaim people began from lone individuals called by God. God's foundation progressively expanded to families, societies and nations, and today has reached the world level. The providence to separate Satan began with the clan society and continued through stages of political and social development: feudalism, monarchy and, today, democracy. At present, our world is divided into two: the democratic world, which seeks to create societies on God's side, and the communist world, which has been establishing regimes on Satan's side.

In other words, although fallen human history began under the sovereignty of Satan, God's providence has brought about a progressive transformation of the hearts of people and has nurtured their original nature, which seeks goodness through religion, philosophy and ethics. This inner nurturing has inspired groups which seek a just rule to separate from the prevailing evil. This process of separation has culminated in the establishment of two opposing powers on the global level. These two sovereignties, with contrary purposes, can by no means peacefully coexist. As human history nears its consummation, they will surely arrive at the point of intersection, colliding internally in the realm of ideology. This inner conflict may spur them to fight external wars with military forces. At the conclusion of this conflict, Satan's sovereignty will perish forever and Heaven's sovereignty will be re-established as the one, eternal sovereignty of God. Today we are at this very point of intersection, when these two worlds are confronting each other in the final battle. This is yet more evidence that the present era is the Last Days.

The flow of human history, in which good and evil are gradually separated, may be compared to muddy water. When muddy water is flowing slowly, the mud sinks to the bottom while the clear water rises to the top, until eventually the mud and water are completely separated. Human history is similar: with the passage of time, the evil sovereignty slowly sinks to destruction while the good sovereignty gradually ascends on the path of prosperity. After these two sovereignties intersect near the end of history, the good sovereignty will remain as God's eternal Kingdom, while the evil sovereignty will perish in eternal darkness.

The era when the paths of these good and evil sovereignties intersect is the Last Days. This is also the time when Adam and Eve's fall from the top of the growth stage will be restored through indemnity. All people in this era will suffer through great ideological confusion, much as the first human ancestors at the point of their temptation were utterly confused as to whom they should obey and what should guide their actions.

During the course of the providence of restoration, there were several occurrences of the Last Days, when the good and evil sovereignties came to the point of intersection. The times of Noah and Jesus, as mentioned earlier, were also the Last Days. Hence, they too were times when the two sovereignties intersected. Yet because people failed to accomplish their portion of responsibility, God's efforts to destroy the evil sovereignty were frustrated, and He had to begin once again the providence to separate good from evil. At the time of Jesus' return, the two sovereignties will intersect once more. The course of the providence progresses in a spiral path, moving forward in pursuit of the purpose of creation while events periodically repeat themselves in a circular fashion. Consequently, history has repeated itself, producing parallel periods.

SIGNS OF THE RESTORATION OF THE THIRD BLESSING

Once Adam and Eve had attained perfection, they were to fulfill God's third blessing by gaining dominion over the natural world. Dominion over the natural world has two aspects: internal and external. Both these aspects of dominion were lost to humankind at the Fall, but we witness their restoration in the present era. This also suggests that the present era is the Last Days.

Internal dominion denotes dominion of the heart. A person who reaches perfection and comes fully to resonate with God in heart will experience God's Heart as his own reality. Hence, he will be able to love the creation with the same love as that which emanates from God's Heart and appreciate its beauty with the same delight as God. This is the meaning of dominion of the heart. However, when human beings fell and could no longer experience God's Heart as a reality, they also could no longer relate to the creation with the same love as that which flows from God's Heart. God's providence of restoration through religion, philosophy, ethics and so forth, has gradually elevated the spirituality of fallen people toward God. In the modern world, there is evidence that people are regaining the worthiness to govern the creation through heart.

External dominion denotes proper mastery of the creation through science and technology. Had our first ancestors reached perfection and attained internal dominion over the creation, able to love it with the same heart as God, then

their sensibility to the spiritual dimension of creation would have developed to the highest degree. This would have stimulated the rapid advancement of science, giving them external dominion over everything in the natural world. Humankind would have reached the stars long ago and harnessed the full potential of the universe. Economic progress would have accompanied the development of science and technology, creating a comfortable and pleasant living environment.

However, due to the Fall, people's spirituality declined, and they lost internal dominion over the natural world. Their spiritual sensibility became as dull as those of animals, and they descended to the level of primitive man. Consequently, they also lost external dominion over the natural world. Through God's providence of restoration, people's spirituality is being elevated and their internal dominion over the creation is being restored. As a result, their external dominion is also being renewed, leading to today's highly advanced science. Modern people have built an extremely comfortable and pleasant living environment through the economic progress that has accompanied scientific development. Fallen people have thus been restoring their dominion over the universe, advancing toward the re-establishment of God's third blessing. Observing this, we are assured that the present era is the Last Days.

To summarize, the world's cultural spheres are converging toward one global cultural sphere based on one religion. Concurrently, nations are moving toward forming an apparatus for international governance, having progressed from the League of Nations to the United Nations. Today, people are envisioning plans for a world government. In the sphere of economics, the world is moving in the direction of establishing one international market. Highly developed transportation and communication technology have overcome the separation of time and space. People today can travel and communicate with each other almost as if they were all living in the same village. People of all races, from East and West, can meet with one another as easily as if they were members of a large family. People on all six continents are crossing the oceans seeking friendship and brotherly love. However, a family can be formed only when there is a father and a mother; only then can true brotherly love arise. Only when Christ comes again as the Parent of humanity will all people join together in one great family and live harmoniously in the global village.

As these events unfold, we may know that today is surely the Last Days. There is yet one final gift that history must present to humanity: it is the cosmic teaching which can bind together all the strangers of the global village into one family through the love and guidance of the same parents.

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2. The Last Days and the New Truth

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Fallen people have been overcoming their internal ignorance by enlightening their spirituality and intellect with “spirit and truth” (John 4:23) through religion. “Truth” may be divided into two types: internal truth as taught by religion, which helps people overcome internal ignorance, and external truth as obtained through science, which helps people overcome external ignorance. Accordingly, we can discern two aspects within the intellect: the internal intellect, awakened by internal truth, and the external intellect, awakened by external truth. Religions develop as the internal intellect pursues internal truth, while science advances as the external intellect pursues external truth.

“Spirit” in this context denotes the inspiration of Heaven. Cognition of a spiritual reality begins when it is perceived through the five senses of the spirit self. These perceptions resonate through the five physical senses and are felt physiologically. Cognition of truth, on the other hand, arises from the knowledge gleaned from the physical world as it is perceived directly through our physiological sense organs. Cognition thus takes place through both spiritual and physical processes.

Human beings become complete only when their spirit self and physical self are unified. Hence, the experience of divine inspiration gained through spiritual cognition and the knowledge of truth obtained through physical cognition should become fully harmonized and awaken the spirituality and intellect together. It is only when the spiritual and physical dimensions of cognition resonate together that we can thoroughly comprehend God and the universe.

God thus assists ignorant, fallen people to elevate their spirituality and enlighten their intellect through spirit and truth. By these means, God conducts His providence to restore people to the original state before the Fall. In the course of history, people’s spiritual and intellectual levels have gradually been elevated due to the merit of the age in the providence of restoration. Hence, the quality of spiritual experience and the depth of religious and scientific knowledge have risen accordingly.

Spirit and truth are unique, eternal and unchanging. However, the degree and scope of their teaching and the means of their expression will vary from one age to another as they restore humankind from a state of utter ignorance. For example, in the age prior to the Old Testament, when people were still unenlightened and could not directly receive the Word of truth, God commanded them to make sacrificial offerings as a substitute for the Word. In the course of time, the spirituality and intellect of human beings were elevated

to the point when, in Moses' day, God granted them the Law, and at the time of Jesus He gave the Gospel. Jesus made it clear that his words were not the truth itself; rather, he declared that he himself was "the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) Jesus was the incarnation of the truth. His words were just a means by which he expressed himself. Thus, the scope and depth of Jesus' words and the method of his teaching varied according to whom he was speaking.

In this sense, we must understand that the verses in the Bible are only one means of expressing the truth and are not the truth itself. The New Testament is but an interim textbook given to enlighten the people of two thousand years ago, whose spiritual and intellectual levels were far lower than today. The modern, scientific-minded thirst for the truth cannot be satisfied by expressions of truth which are limited in scope and couched in symbols and parables aimed specifically at instructing the people of an earlier age. For modern, intellectual people to be enlightened in the truth, there must appear another textbook of higher and richer content, with a more scientific method of expression. We call this the new truth. This truth, as discussed previously, must be able to reconcile science and religion as one united undertaking in order to overcome the internal and external aspects of people's ignorance.

Let us examine some other reasons a new expression of truth must appear. The Bible, as was noted, is not the truth itself, but rather is a textbook teaching the truth. It renders important parts of the truth in symbols and in parables. Since these are open to various interpretations, there have arisen numerous disagreements among believers, causing them to divide into many denominations. The primary cause of denominational divisions lies in the character of the Bible, not in the people. The strife between denominations will only grow more intractable unless a new truth emerges which can elucidate the symbols and parables obscuring the essential truths of the Bible. Without this new truth, God's providence, which comes through the unification of Christianity, can never reach its goal. This is why Jesus promised that in the Last Days he will give us the new Word of truth:

I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. - John 16:25

Due to the disbelief of the people of his time, Jesus died on the cross without being able to teach all that was in his heart. As he said, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12) What is more, Jesus added, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now," (John 16:12) disclosing how sorrowful he was about the inability of even his closest disciples to receive all that he wanted to share.

Nevertheless, the words that Jesus left unspoken will not remain forever a secret, but one day will be divulged through the Holy Spirit as a new expression of truth. As Jesus said:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. - John 16:13

Moreover, it is written:

I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. - Rev. 5:1

The words that Jesus wanted to give us are written down and sealed in this very scroll. When John wept because he could not find anyone worthy to open the scroll and read it in heaven, on earth or under the earth, one of the elders said, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." (Rev. 5:3-5) The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, signifies Christ. The day must come when Christ will open the seven seals of the scroll, whose contents have long remained secret to humankind, and reveal to the faithful the words of the new truth. This is why it is written, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." (Rev. 10:11) It is also prophesied that in the Last Days:

I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. - Acts 2:17

For all these reasons, we can expect the appearance of a new expression of truth in the Last Days.

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3. Our Attitude in the Last Days

When we examine the progress of history in the providence of restoration, we find that a new dispensation begins when the old dispensation is about to end. Accordingly, the beginning of the new overlaps the conclusion of the old; As darkness falls on the old history, the new history is already dawning. At such a time, the good and evil sovereignties, which had their origins at the same point yet pursued contrary purposes and have each borne their fruits on the world level, come to the point of intersection. Hence, those who live in this period suffer internally from anxiety, fear and confusion due to the absence of a guiding ideology or philosophy. They suffer externally from strife and battles fought with fearsome weapons. In the Last Days, disasters and devastation will abound, as Jesus said, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.” (Matt. 24:7)

In the Last Days, it is inevitable that such devastation take place in order to vanquish the power of evil and erect the rule of good. In the midst of such wretchedness, God without fail will establish the center of the emerging good sovereignty in order to usher in a new age. Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus were among those whom God raised up as the central figures of their respective new eras. Today, at this historical transition period, we must find the person whom God has designated as the central figure of the new dispensation in order that we might participate in this new age and give honor to God’s wishes.

The providence of the new age does not begin on the ashes of the old age. On the contrary, the new age sprouts and grows amidst the final phases of the old age and comes into conflict with that age. Accordingly, it is difficult for a person steeped in the old tradition to understand or accept the new providence. This is why the saints and sages leading the dispensation of a new age were often persecuted and martyred as victims of the old age. Jesus, for example, who inaugurated the New Testament Age, came at the close of the Old Testament Age in such a way as to bewilder the faithful adherents of the Mosaic Law. He was ostracized by the Jewish people and eventually crucified. This is why Jesus said, “New wine must be put into fresh wineskins.” (Luke 5:38)

Jesus is to come again at the close of the New Testament Age. He will give us the new truth with which to found a new age, signified by the Bible’s vision of a new heaven and new earth. (Rev.21:1-7) Just as Jesus at his first coming was derided by the Jews as one possessed by Beelzebub, (Matt.12:24) he will similarly be persecuted by the Christians when he comes again. Jesus therefore prophesied that at his Second Advent, “he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” (Luke 17:25) At this historical transition period,

those who are comfortably entrenched in the ways of the old age will surely face judgment, along with the old age.

Fallen people's spiritual sensibility is extremely dull. Hence, they generally tend to adhere strictly to the letter of the truth in their efforts to follow God's providence. Such people cannot readily adjust themselves to the dispensation of the new age, even though the providence of restoration is moving toward it. They are generally too strongly attached to the outdated perspective provided by the doctrines of the old age. This is well illustrated by the case of the Jewish people of Jesus' day who were so attached to the Old Testament that they could not respond to Jesus' call to open a new chapter of the providence. On the other hand, those believers who receive divine inspiration through prayer are able to grasp spiritually the providence of the new age. Even though this may put them at odds with the doctrines of the old age, they will still respond to the promptings of the spirit and follow the calling of the new providence. Among the disciples of Jesus, there was not one who was overly attached to the Old Testament Scriptures. Rather, they all responded to the spiritual experiences which they could sense through their inner minds. In the Last Days, people who lead an ardent life of prayer or who live by their conscience will feel intense anxiety in their hearts. This is because in their hearts they vaguely sense a spiritual calling and want to follow the providence of the new age, yet they have not come in contact with the new truth which can guide them to act accordingly. These are the chosen ones who, once they hear the new truth, will be awakened simultaneously in their spirits and intellects by spirit and truth. They will then fully understand God's providential needs concerning the new age and will volunteer with great enthusiasm and delight.

We who are alive today are living in the Last Days. We should cultivate a humble heart and make the utmost effort to receive divine inspiration through prayer. We should not be strongly attached to conventional concepts, but rather should direct ourselves to be receptive to the spirit, in order that we may find the new truth which can guide us to the providence of the new age. When we come across this truth, we should ascertain whether it leads us to become one with Heaven's guidance. We should examine ourselves as to whether or not genuine, heavenly bliss springs forth abundantly from the depths of our soul. Only in this way can we, the seekers in the Last Days, discover the path to true salvation.

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