

A few years back ... We had been in a Volume Four study on weeknights up in the Groton/New London area for about a year and a half ... which is really not a long time for a fourth volume study.

It was been a fantastic study ... one of those studies that is full of energy ... you really look forward to being there ... brethren are ready and reading ahead and preparing thoughts and questions ... they are engaged in the discussion... they leave with questions to be discussed the following week ... and you leave thinking wow, I am glad I was there because I really would have missed a lot if I chosen not to go.

Those are precious and valuable times ... and studies.

And ... the Forth Volume is so current and timely even though it was written 125 years ago ... Written in 1897 and yet, as you read, you think ... my word, it's as though Br Russell or one of his quoted writers might just have been writing about today ...

If you haven't visited the forth volume in a while, I highly encourage you to pick it up once again. Although though the size may be daunting ... or you think oh it's sooo dated and old news ... re-visit it.

So when we shake our heads about world events

We cringe when we hear news feeds

... and those times we begin to feel uneasy, anxious and even scared about the condition of the world we live in ...

This book (The Battle of Armageddon) ... will help to put it (the world) into perspective

It makes sense out of the illogical and indescribable...

So - Let me try to do this in just ten minutes ...

I'm going to remind about the content of chapters 1 through 10 of Volume Four, The Battle of Armageddon

... then, then ... I'm going to start this discourse.

(If you happened to bring your fourth volume feel free to open it or find it on your electronic device... even you have just the table of contents.)

Chapter 1: The Day of Vengeance

- The destruction of the present order of things (nations not individuals) ,
- this destruction will bring about the kingdom and a time for individual judgment - under more favorable conditions.

Chapter 2: The Doom of Babylon - Before the Great Court

- Her Confusion-National Babylon-"Christendom"
- This prophecy has both a literal and a symbolic fulfillment.
- Babylon the city represents the Catholic and sometimes the Protestant systems.
- While Babylon the Empire represents Christendom, the Christian nations both civil and religious.
- Babylon's doom will be gradually consuming and suddenly violent.

While Chapters 1 and 2 discuss - What happens in the day of vengeance, to whom it happens, where and when...

Chapter 3: The Necessity and Justice of the Day of Vengeance

- discusses why the day of vengeance happens.
- Disobeying God always brings a consequence - Civil Powers and Religious Powers have both ignored lessons and warnings ... and both will fall.

Chapter 4: Babylon Arraigned Before the Great Court

- God will not keep silent forever (Psalm 50). Formal charges are being brought before the Jehovah in an open court as the world looks on. The parties accused are the Monarchy (Civil Powers), Aristocracy (Social Powers) and the Clergy (Religious Powers).

Chapter 5: Babylon Before the Great Court, Her Confusion-National

- “The civil powers of Christendom perceive that the judgment is going against them and that the stability of their power is by no means assured, ... ”

Chapter 6: Babylon Before the Great Court, Her Confusion-Ecclesiatical

- “If the civil powers of Christendom are in perplexity (from the previous chapter) and the distress of nations is everywhere manifest, the religious situation surely presents no hopeful contrast of peace and security;
- ... for modern ecclesiasticism, like the nations, is ensnared in the net of its own weaving.
- If the nations having sown to the wind the seeds of unrighteousness are about to reap an abundant harvest in a whirlwind of affliction, the great nominal church, ... which has shared in the sowing, shall also share in the reaping.”

Chapter 7: “...The Preparation of the Elements...”

- The nations are assembling together as the “world gets smaller” due to world communication; which comes about because of the ease of world travel, television, internet, telephones (Br. Russell’s list includes telegraphs, newspapers and multiplication of books)
- “Selfishness has gathered and has been steadily preparing them for the predicted and now fast approaching, retribution – anarchy –which is so graphically described as the “fire of God’s jealousy” or anger, which is about to consume utterly the present social order.”

Chapter 8: The Cries of the Reapers

- The farmers through history were the stable, conservative, even Godly voice in society.

- However, machinery in farming has changed all that; the farmer is now a part of the “small world” we discussed earlier, and is no longer isolated and knows the city luxuries.
- The demise of the farmer will play a part in the demise of the social order of things.

Chapter 9: The Conflict Irrepressible

- This study is filled with pages of words from worldly wise men who, see the dilemma more or less clearly, but few have anything to suggest as a remedy.
- Even today, most seem to know the world is in a condition without a fix and love to talk about the problems but don't claim to have any answers.
- Many of the well-meaning individuals who had proposed remedies in Br. Russell's day, as we know better today, hadn't seen the tip of the iceberg.

Chapter 10: Proposed Remedies

- There are some remedies offered by mostly sincere, thoughtful people looking for a utopian society, which would include peace and prosperity for everyone.
- Mankind has had plenty of opportunity to heal themselves through education, liberty, prohibition, female suffrage and through self government. (whether - Communism, Socialism, Democracy, Nationalism, even Anarchy)
- In God's Kingdom mankind will realize God's Plan is the only plan that would ever have worked.

... then you would get to Chapter Eleven - The Battle of Armageddon.

The chapter with the same name as the book.

In a little more than 5 minutes:

We went through (this much) ... 526 pages of the 656 pages in the volume. That is 80 % ... so, the fourth volume isn't so daunting as we might have thought.

The question is :

Understanding these things ... seeing where we are in this time line ...

WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT WE TO BE ?

As I begin for real ...

I'd like to start and end my thoughts today by reading five passages of scriptures. Five to begin ... then five different passages to end ... as I read these to open, watch for a common theme or a sequence.

- Haggai 2:7

(7) And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

- Daniel 12:1-4,10.

"Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased." "The wise shall understand," "And there shall be a Time of Trouble such as was not since there was a nation."

- Romans 8:22

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

- Romans 8:19

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

"The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own." (Phillips)

- Zephaniah 3:8+9

(8) Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

(9) For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

The theme, the sequence, the message ...

God has allowed man ample time to manage his affairs and he has not done a very good job ... and now ... In God's due time ... He is going to intervene.

He is going to ...assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them (His) indignation, even all (His) fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of (His) jealousy.

(9) **For then** will (He) turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

How long have we waited and prayed for this day?

“The time is short.” (Is the mantra.)

I have heard that my entire life ...

I am now in my 60's

I will tell you this ... we are sixty years closer

...and Habbakuk reminds us ...

Habbakuk 2:3 “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

About two thousand years ago ... the Lord took the disciples and as they moved away from the crowds ...

Matthew 24:3

(3) And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Three questions: 1. When shall these things be?
 2. What shall be the sign of thy coming?
 3. and when is the end of the world
 (the end of this age)?

We refer to Jesus' response (in Matthew 24+25, as well as Mark and Luke) as Our Lord's Great Prophecy ...it was a question then that had already been discussed for 4000 years old ...even the ancient worthies pondered these things.

Hebrews 11:13

(13) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

... and now 6000 years down the road we still look and watch for the signs and wait for the answers ...

Understanding:

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”
Matthew 24:36

...although we might agree that, as we get very close, the church may begin to get some very good ideas ... some more clear hints and indications.

A number of years ago, for all intents and purposes, I stopped listening and watching the news.

Now – I know !

I do know that we don't want to be ostriches, with our heads in the sand ... but,

I do know there is value in being informed ...

I do know we don't want to be ignorant about current events ...

...but, here are a few of my reasons for avoiding the ongoing onslaught of news and media.

(At this time I will focus only on the news ... I have other reasons for avoiding media ... I will save that discussion for another time.)

#1-Most of it was bad:

- ... not just crummy news ... it was very bad ... and sad and was going beyond informing me ... it was sticking with me and bringing my disposition down ...and having a negative effect on me.
- I read there is something referred to as “attitude maintenance”.
One writer (of Eliciting Excellence) writes:
“Our reality is determined by our perspective and our perspective is influenced by our attitude.” (repeat)
Our attitude affects how we experience life.
- A person's attitude affects how we approach challenges. ...
- The key to having a positive attitude is to control what goes into your head.

No matter what goes through this gray matter it has an influence.

... and for me if it is all negative and unseemly, ... it makes me a very sad, negative , scared and unsettled person. (I think that what the adversary wants.)

#2 - I found I was having a hard time trusting the news ... any

of it.

I can be easily distracted by a confident articulate person ... and what I was finding was one person who I felt I could trust would say one thing and later another person with confidence and all the right words would totally shred the first ones points.

It is seemed like the delivery was mostly for entertainment ... it seems to have all become extravagant.

Furthermore:

On a few occasions ... I have experienced events that later made it to the news ... and as I am listening, - I'm thinking well I didn't see it that way, that's not how I remember it.

So what can I trust ... can I trust what I hear about a political candidate? Can I trust what I hear about an event that occurred on the other side of the country or the world ... what has happened to responsible journalism?

#3 Most of the news is irrelevant to me/us.

While it's true that every event is relevant to some people, the truth is that the majority of the news is not relevant to most of us.

An accident, a fire and a murder are each a sad and alarming event, but unless you are among those involved, the events have little to no impact on you or your life. If any of those events happened to people you know, you will undoubtedly find out about it and more importantly do something about and help.

The same holds true for international events. A bombing, an earthquake, and a currency collapse are all devastation.

But, do I really need to watch the same event over and over and over again on these loops on the news?

I figured and I've found it to be so ... if it is big enough news, it will reach me ...
So my conclusion :

- When convenient and in moderate doses catch snippets of the news and Watch the trends.

- In this : “Age of Information”

Let’s go back now ... talk about Volume Four.

Volume Four

Studies in the Scriptures

The Battle of Armageddon

First Published in 1897 ... (125 years ago)

- And although the Volume (Which was originally titled The Day of Vengeance ... a title Br,. Russell later felt was a little what we might say “off putting”) carried a message

specific to that time and to the church of that time, the brotherhood of that time, ... needful and appropriate to the circumstance, (as the seventh messenger delivering “meat in due season”) ... yet, it’s messages continues to resonate to us today 2022.

- Its focus, the harvest and most specifically the end of the harvest and the end of the Gospel age ... the crescendo of circumstances and events leading up to the transition into the Millennial Age.

The stage set:

(1897)

- The president of the United States had just changed from Grover Cleveland to William McKinley
- The French Revolution only recently past just under a hundred years before
- Napoleon (I tend to think of Napoleon as ancient history ... (had just ended his reign so-to-speak in 1815)
- Charles Dickens has just written the words - “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times” in his Tale of Two Cities. (1859)

Br. Russell is writing these words prior to:

- No World War I
- No World War II
- No Great Depression

At the writing of Volume IV, Br. Russell had not seen: (picture a world without)

- Wholesale manufacturing of cars
- Commercial air flight
- And we were just at the brink of television (the first US TV broadcast in 1928) (imagine what he would think of a cell phone or personal computer)

Think of the changes ... think of the the crescendo of technology.

It was not that long after the Louisiana Purchase ... the Gilded Age and America was transforming.

Plug for the History Channel’s- “The Men Who Built America”
(Vanderbilt, Rockerfella, Carnegie and others)

The stage was set for ...
unprecedented growth
unprecedented innovation
unprecedented wealth

and with it

unprecedented greed
unprecedented discontent
unprecedented selfishness

"Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth [the present social order] shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy..."

Zephaniah 3:8&9

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The main object of this volume is not, therefore, to enlighten the world, which can appreciate only the logic of events and will have no other; but to forewarn, forearm, comfort, encourage and strengthen "the household of faith," so that they may not be dismayed, but may be in full harmony and sympathy with even the severest measures of divine discipline in the chastening of the world, seeing by faith the glorious outcome in the precious fruits of righteousness and enduring peace.

...to forewarn, forearm, comfort, encourage and strengthen "the household of faith," so that they may not be dismayed, but may be in full harmony and sympathy with even the severest measures of divine discipline in the chastening of the world, seeing by faith the glorious outcome in the precious fruits of righteousness and enduring peace.

So ...

What now ...

2 Peter 3: 9-11

(9) The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

(10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

(11) Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

... so ... again ... **what manner of persons ought we to be ???**

That is exactly the question and has been the question for millennia.

- ... knowing these things
- ... knowing God
- ... understanding His character
- ... knowing His plan ...

... what manner of persons ought we to be ...

I think the answer is twofold

One: There is a work going on within us...

Two: And there is the work going on outside of us ... outwardly ... the work we do as we navigate through this world we live in ...

Both are essential and critically important.

I will briefly acknowledge the first ...

But, it is the second I want to emphasize at this time ... it's the second that had been the emphasis of our weeknight study.

The Internal Work:

I call this "Endo-thermic"... as a reaction that takes energy inward as it occurs.

Quickly: Some things that we do or work on to help ourselves, our characters
Develop more Christlike.

- Study: Fill yourself (your mind and your heart) with the Word of God
- Pray: In all things and at all times ... in thanks, in praise, in intercession and in communion ... and along with prayer, watch ... plan times in your day to be quiet and listen for God's answers.
- Meet together :
Hebrews 10:25
"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

- Romans 13:8 teaches us – “Owe no man anything”
(I’ve heard it said, my guess you have heard the following suggestion.)
We might live our spiritual life as though you will be gone tomorrow - And live our temporal life as though we may live another 50-60-70 years.
- Don’t be deceived.
No body wakes up in the morning and say to themselves ...I think I will allow myself to be deceived (duped, fooled, conned) today ...

Mark 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: Again ... stay in the scriptures.

But, although worthy of our serious consideration, this is not our focus here/now:

... rather, it’s our Our External Work the one I call “Exothermic”, outward experience as we navigate through our lives ... as a reaction that releases energy as it occurs.

2Corinthians 5:20

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,…”

As we maneuver through our lives, how do those we come in contact with see God and Jesus how do they hear the Gospel in our lives?

Sermons We See

by
Edgar Guest

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear;
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,
For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

HERE ARE THREE SUGGESTIONS

A to do list ... but, It’s really not a to do list ... but, rather a to be list.

Kind of like the way we sometimes emphasize Matthew 6:3-10 ... The Beatitudes ... referring to them as The Be – Attitudes.

#1 - Be at Peace.

What makes us uneasy, what makes us anxious, frightful, scared ... it's the unknowing ... we are afraid of the dark because of the unknown ...
Knowledge, ... knowing ... insight ... gives us peace.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Instead of the news -

Philippians 4:8 ... what so ever things are ...

True, honest, just, pure, lovely of good report, virtuous, praiseworthy ...

Think on these things.

Romans 15:13

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Going again to Our Lord's Great Prophecy

Matthew 24: verse 37

(37) But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

- God is repenting creating man because of his sinfulness.
- God is going to destroy the Earth and Noah is commissioned to build and ark
(Remember that the name Noah means: ... "rest".)
In the face of turmoil, God send rest ... comfort.
We are that rest ... to this world ...

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

#1 – Be at Peace.

#2 - Be the Salt.

Matthew 5:13

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

We are the salt of this Earth.

We are that preservative ... we are the salt in this world.

It is you that are preserving this world ... once the church, the salt is gone ... this world will no longer be preserved.

Just as it had been through each of the stages of the Gospel Age ... it was the church, the brethren that preserved the integrity of the word ... as the false systems distorted and wrested and twisted the scriptures ... the true church was the voice of truth, however quiet and demure that voice was... it had the influence of holding the false church accountable.

And salt had great value, just as the Treasure hid in that field of the parable in Chapter 13 of Matthew.

Matthew 13:44-46

(44) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

With your knowledge of the events of this world and God's character and His plan for all mankind, bring out the flavor of life as you navigate your life.

#3 - Be the Light.

Matthew 5:14

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

John8:12

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

... so it is not our light, but Jesus' light through us

We are ambassadors ... it is OUR JOB to spread the Gospel.

We can think of all sorts of reasons why we don't do this ...

- we are busy,
 - I don't want to bother them,
 - I'm not confident enough
- ... we have been given light, ... it is our responsibility to share it

What does the term Gospel mean ... it means "Good News"

Good News and we are the anchormen ... we are the delivery system for that good news.

I recently heard someone express it this way:

Imagine if you turned on the evening news and the commentator was at the desk all dressed up and the camera rolls and the news person just sat there ... they didn't say anything ... their job is to tell the news , ... our job is to tell the Gospel.

We are the light to this world to point the way ... to shed light in a dark and gloomy place. And if you ever wonder what effect little you can have ... remember what lighting one little match or one little candle does to a very dark room.

God has called us to a Vocation ... not a vacation.

Vocation (from the Latin "vocat" meaning to call) ... our vocation our calling ... is to:

Be the light.

Be the salt.

Be at peace.

I said near the onset of these remarks ... I was going to open with a set of five passages and close with a different set ... again look for a theme.

- Ecclesiastes 12: 8, 13, 14
 - (8) Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.
 - (13) Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.
 - (14) For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

- Matthew 6:33
 - (33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

- Proverbs 3:5-6
 - (5) Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
 - (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

- Phillipians 1:6
 - (6) Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

- Matthew 25:21
 - His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.