

SIGNS OF THE SECOND ADVENT

1. Daniel, chapter two:

The second chapter of Daniel's prophecy has to do with five universal kingdoms which were to succeed each other. The first four are earthly and perishable; the fifth is immortal and will stand forever. [ST186x 6.1](#)

The first four kingdoms are represented by the several parts of the great metallic image, of gold, silver, brass, and iron mixed with clay. The golden head represents the kingdom of Babylon; the silver breast and arms of the image represent Media and Persia; the brazen sides, Grecia; the iron legs, Rome; the feet and toes, part of iron and part of clay, symbolize the divided, weakened condition of Rome. [ST186x 6.2](#)

The several specifications of this line of prophecy are fulfilled, excepting the last, which is expressed in these words: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." [Daniel 2:34](#). [ST186x 6.3](#)

2. Daniel, chapter seven:

The seventh chapter of this prophecy covers the same ground as the second. The symbols employed are a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a nameless beast with ten horns. The lion, like the golden head of the image, represents Babylon; the bear, like the silver breast and arms, Media and Persia; the leopard, like the brazen sides, Grecia; the nondescript beast, the same as the iron legs, Rome. His ten horns, the same as the ten toes of the image, the present condition of the Roman empire, divided into ten kingdoms. [ST186x 7.1](#)

This line of prophecy, however, is more definite than that of the second chapter, especially that which relates to the fourth kingdom. The Roman beast is given in a second form with three horns plucked up by a little horn. This little horn is a symbol of the papacy, through whose influence three of the ten kingdoms were subdued in its onward march up to complete supremacy, A. D. 538. The blasphemous character, cruel persecutions, and the period of the civil power of the little horn, are given by the prophet in these words:
— [ST186x 7.2](#)

"And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." [Daniel 7:25](#). This period is the same as the forty-two months of [Revelation 13:5](#), and the twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days of [Revelation 12:6](#). From 538, 1260 years would extend to 1798, when, on Feb. 10, Berthier, a French general, entered the city of Rome and captured it. On the 15th of the same month, the pope was taken prisoner and shut up in the Vatican. The Papal government, which had continued from the time of Justinian, was abolished, and a republican form of government given to Rome. The pope was carried captive to France, where he died in 1799. Thus, he that led into captivity went into captivity; he that killed with the sword was killed (subdued) with the sword. [Revelation 13:10](#). [ST186x 7.3](#)

Where are we in this prophetic line which reaches to the end of all earthly governments? We have passed the lion, Babylon; the bear, Media and Persia; the leopard, with his four wings and four heads, Grecia, has been passed. The history of the terrible beast, Rome, has been written; and the papacy, symbolized by the little horn, has fulfilled its twelve hundred and sixty years of blasphemy and terrible persecutions; and its civil power was taken away eighty-two years since. [ST186x 8.1](#)

For what do we wait? The prophet answers in these words: "I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." [Daniel 7:11](#). "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." [Verse 27](#). [ST186x 8.2](#)

3. Daniel, chapter eight:

The eighth chapter of Daniel presents a third prophetic line, embracing a ram with two horns, a symbol of the kingdom of Media and Persia; a goat with a notable horn, Grecia, with Alexander for its first king. The four horns taking the place of the one, represents the division of Alexander's kingdom after his death. And the little horn which waxed exceeding great, which stood up against the Prince of princes, representing Jesus Christ at his crucifixion, is Rome. This "power" being "broken without hands," represents its destruction at the second coming of Christ, when the man of sin, a symbol of the same power, will be consumed by the spirit of Christ's mouth, and be destroyed by the brightness of his coming. [2 Thessalonians 2:3-8](#). [ST186x 9.1](#)

4. Daniel, chapter eleven:

In the eleventh chapter of this book, the same ground is again covered by historic prophecy, reaching down to the standing up of Michael, or the reign of Christ, the great time of trouble, the deliverance of the saints, and the resurrection of the dead. This chain of prophecy terminates with these words: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever," [Daniel 12:1-3](#), carrying us out into the boundless ocean of eternity. With this view of the subject, how forcible the words of Gabriel to Daniel, "I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days." [Daniel 10:14](#). [ST186x 9.2](#)

5. The dark day of May 19, 1780:

"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." [Matthew 24:29](#). [ST186x 10.1](#)

The tribulation here mentioned is that which was upon the church of Christ for 1260 years, during the persecuting career of the little horn of [Daniel 7:25](#). Compare with [Revelation 12:6](#); [13:5](#). Then, immediately after the tribulation of those days of papal persecution, the sun was to be darkened. Mark this: It does not say *after those days*; but *after the tribulation* of those days. The *days* reached to 1798, eighteen years this side of the dark day; but the *tribulation* of the days ceased before the sun was darkened in 1780. The days of tribulation were shortened for the elect's sake. [Matthew 24:22](#). The reformation under Martin Luther modified this tribulation, and continued to restrain the rage and consume the power of the papacy until 1700, since which time, according to all church

history, there has been no general persecution against the church. [Mark 13:24](#), makes this point very plain: “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened.” That is, before the 1260 years should close, but after the tribulation, or martyrdom, of the church ceased, the sun was darkened. Those who would point to the future, or to the past, prior to the eighteenth century, for the darkening of the sun here mentioned, will do well to read again [Mark 13:24](#): “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened.” [ST186x 10.2](#)

“In the month of May, 1780, there was a very terrific dark day in New England, when all faces seemed to gather blackness, and the people were filled with fear. There was great distress in the village where Edward Lee lived, — ‘men’s hearts failing them for fear’ that the Judgment day was at hand.” — *Tract No. 379 of Am. Tract Society. — Life of Edwards.* [ST186x 11.1](#)

“The 19th day of May, 1780, was a remarkably dark day. Candles were lighted in many houses. The birds were silent, and disappeared. The fowls retired to roost. It was the general opinion that the day of Judgment was at hand. The legislature of Connecticut was in session, at Hartford, but being unable to transact business, adjourned. — *President Dwight in (Ct.) Historical Collections.* [ST186x 11.2](#)

“On the 19th of May, 1780, an uncommon darkness took place all over New England, and extended to Canada. It continued about fourteen hours,, or from ten o’clock in the morning till midnight. The darkness was so great that people were unable to read common print, or tell the time of the day by their watches, or to dine, or transact their ordinary business, without the light of candles. They became dull and gloomy, and some were excessively frightened. The fowls went to roost. Objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance, and everything bore the appearance of gloom and night. Similar days have occasionally been known, though inferior in the degree or extent of their darkness. The causes of these phenomena are unknown. They certainly were not the result of eclipses.” — *Sear’s Guide.* [ST186x 11.3](#)

6. The dark night of May 19, 1780:

“And the moon shall not give her light.” [Matthew 24:29.](#) [ST186x 12.1](#)

“The night succeeding that day (May 19, 1780,) was of such pitchy darkness that, in some instances, horses could not be compelled to leave the stable when wanted for service. About midnight, the clouds were dispersed, and the moon and stars appeared with unimpaired brilliancy.” — *Stone’s History of Beverly.* [ST186x 12.2](#)

Mr. Tenny, of Exeter, N. H., speaking of the dark day and dark night of May 19, 1780, says: [ST186x 12.3](#)

“The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as has ever been observed since the Almighty first gave birth to light. I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable darkness, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes was equally invisible with the blackest velvet.” [ST186x 12.4](#)

Dr. Adams, speaking of the dark night, says: [ST186x 13.1](#)

“At nine, it was a darkness to be felt by more senses than one, as there was a strong smell of soot. Almost every one who happened to be out in the evening, got lost in going home. The darkness was as uncommon in the night as it was in the day, as the moon had fulfilled the day before.” [ST186x 13.2](#)

7. The falling stars of Nov.13, 1833:

“And the stars shall fall from heaven.” [Matthew 24:29](#). [ST186x 13.3](#)

“At the cry, ‘Look out of the window,’ I sprang from a deep sleep, and with wonder saw the east lighted up with the dawn and meteors. The zenith, the north, and the west also, showed the falling stars, in the very image of one thing, and only one, I ever heard of. 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 6:13](#).” — *Henry Dana Ward, in Journal of Commerce*. [ST186x 13.4](#)

“The extent of the shower of 1833 was such as to cover *no inconsiderable part of the earth’s surface*, from the middle of the Atlantic on the east, to the Pacific on the west; and from the northern coast of South America, to undefined regions among the British possessions on the north, the exhibition was visible, and everywhere presented nearly the same appearance.” — *Prof. Olmstead, of Yale College*. [ST186x 13.5](#)

We now inquire, Why has Christ given the church these signs in the luminaries of heaven, of his second coming? Are they given to deceive, and lead the honest Christian to look for Christ’s coming, when nothing can be known of the period of that event? Preposterous! The fact that Christ foretells signs of his coming, and then states the object of those signs, that the church may *know* when the event is near, even at the doors, is sufficient proof that it is the design of Heaven that the church should understand the period of the second advent. [ST186x 14.1](#)

After stating that the sun should be darkened, and that the moon should not give her light, and that the stars should fall from heaven, Christ gives the parable of the fig-tree, and makes the most distinct application of it. “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.” [Verses 32, 33](#). No figure should exceed the fact illustrated in a single particular. This being the case in the parable of the fig-tree, the point becomes an exceedingly strong one. No language can be more direct. No proof can be more complete. With all that certainty with which we know that summer is nigh when we see the buds and the leaves shoot forth from the trees in spring, and the earth covered with her carpet of green, may we know that Christ is at the doors. [ST186x 14.2](#)

The proclamation of the coming and kingdom of Christ is given to the last generation. God did not send Noah to preach to the next to the last generation before the flood, but to the last. The very generation which was destroyed by the waters of the flood saw Noah build the ark, and heard his warning voice. So God has raised up men to give the solemn warning to the world at the right time to give force to the warning. And the very generation of men that live after the three great signs are fulfilled, and that hear and reject the warning message from Heaven, will drink the cup of the unmingled wrath of God. And those of this very generation who receive the message, suffer disappointments, and endure the trials of the waiting position, will witness the coming of Christ, and exclaim, “Lo, this is our God; we have *waited* for him, and he will save us.” [Isaiah 25:9](#). [ST186x 15.1](#)

With what emphasis our Lord gave utterance to this sentiment. It is a rebuke upon our unbelief. As we read it, God help us to believe it: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." And as though this were not enough to lead us to unwavering faith, he adds these forcible words: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." [ST186x 15.2](#)

8. The seven seals of the sixth chapter of Revelation:

John saw a book in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, sealed with seven seals. In the days of the prophet, before the art of printing and binding was discovered, books were rolls of parchment. "The usual books of the ancients were not like ours, but were volumes, or long pieces of parchment, rolled upon a long stick as we frequently roll silks. Such was this represented which was sealed with seven seals. Not as if the apostle saw all the seals at once; for there were seven volumes wrapped up one within another, each of which was sealed; so that upon opening and unrolling the first, the second appeared to be sealed up till that was opened, and so on to the seventh."

— *Wesley*. [ST186x 16.1](#)

Here we have a figure of the nature of prophecy, and a special symbol of the prophetic history of the Christian church. The book of Revelation relates to the fourth universal empire, and particularly to that portion of the Christian age that was future when the book was given. He, alone, who sees the end from the beginning, could survey the future of the church and present her history to the prophet in seven distinct periods, illustrated by the seven seals. Therefore the Revelation was a sealed book when given to John, to be opened and understood as fulfilled. [ST186x 16.2](#)

"The priest in his consecration was to abide seven days and nights at the door of the tabernacle, keeping the Lord's watch. The number seven is what is called among the Hebrews a number of perfection; and it is often used to denote the *completion, accomplishment, fullness, or perfection*, of a thing, as this period contained the whole course of that time in which God created the world, and appointed the day of rest." — *Dr. Adam Clarke*. [ST186x 17.1](#)

"In the patriarchal history, as well as in the Mosaic legislation, the recurrence of the number seven and its combinations is very frequent. Even in the later old-Testament history this number is met with too often for it to be always accidental..... Jews, Pagans, and Christians have vied with each other in attempts to prove the mysterious character of this number. The estimation in which it was held, on account of its singularly sacred character, may explain its adoption as a sort of representative number. Of this last use of the term seven, instances occur in the following texts: [Leviticus 25:4](#); [1 Samuel 2:5](#); [Psalm 12:6](#); [79:12](#); [Proverbs 26:16](#); [Isaiah 4:1](#); [Matthew 18:21, 22](#); [Luke 17:4](#)." — *Cassell's Bible Dictionary*. vol.i. [ST186x 17.2](#)

We briefly call attention to the events under each of the seven seals in their order. [ST186x 18.1](#)

(a.) The opening of the first seal reveals a white horse, whose rider had a bow and a crown as he went forth conquering and to conquer. This is a fit emblem of the triumphs of the gospel in the first centuries of this dispensation, the whiteness of the horse denoting the purity of faith in that age. [ST186x 18.2](#)

(b.) At the opening of the second seal, there appeared a red horse. If the whiteness of the first horse denoted the purity of the gospel in the first period, the redness of the second horse may denote that in the second period the original purity of the church began to be corrupted. The mystery of iniquity was at work in Paul's day. Errors began to arise, and the love of the world came in at an early date, which ripened into a state of things in Constantine's time, A. D. 323, described by Dr. Rice thus: "It represents a secular period, or union of church and State. Constantine aided the clergy, and put them under obligations to him. Mosheim says of this period, 'There was continual war and trouble.'" [ST186x 18.3](#)

(c.) The opening of the third seal presented a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. The work of corruption in the church progressed rapidly. The black horse, the very opposite of the first, represents a period of great darkness and moral corruption. By the events of the second seal, the way was fully opened for that state of things to be brought about which is here presented. The time that intervened between the reign of Constantine and the establishment of the papacy in A. D. 538, may be justly noted as the time when the darkest errors and grossest superstitions sprung up in the church. [ST186x 18.4](#)

"The balances denoted that religion and civil power would be united in the person who would administer the executive power in the government, and that he would claim the judicial authority both in church and State. This was true among the Roman emperors from the days of Constantine until the reign of Justinian, when he gave the same judicial power to the bishop of Rome." — *Miller's Lectures*, p. 181. [ST186x 19.1](#)

(d.) When the fourth seal was opened, there appeared a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was called Death, and Hell followed with him. The color of this horse, which is pale or yellowish, like that seen in blighted or sickly plants, denotes the condition of things in the church when the papacy bore its unrestrained and persecuting rule, commencing about A. D. 538, and extending to the time when the reformers had exposed the corruptions of the papal system. During that period fifty millions of martyrs lost their lives by the very instrumentalities named in the prophetic description of that period. [ST186x 19.2](#)

(e.) The events to transpire under the fifth seal are, the crying of the martyrs for vengeance, and giving to them white robes. This represents the work of the reformers, and covers the period of the great reformation. In reference to the souls under the altar, Dr. Clarke says: "A symbolical vision was exhibited in which he saw an altar. And under it the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God — martyred for their attachment to Christianity — are represented as being newly slain, as victims to idolatry and superstition. *The altar is upon earth, not in Heaven.*" [ST186x 20.1](#)

"We are not to suppose that this *literally* occurred, and that John actually saw the souls of the martyrs beneath the altar — for the whole representation is symbolical; nor are we to suppose that the injured and the wronged in Heaven actually pray for vengeance on those who wronged them, or that the redeemed in Heaven will continue to pray with reference to things on the earth; but it may be fairly inferred from this that there will be as *real* a remembrance of the wrongs of the persecuted, the injured, and the oppressed, as *if* such prayer were offered there; and that the oppressor has as much to dread from the divine vengeance as *if* those whom he has injured should cry in Heaven to the God who hears prayer, and who takes vengeance. The wrongs done to the children of God, to the orphan, the widow, the down-trodden, to the slave and the outcast, will be as certainly remembered in Heaven as if they who are wronged should plead for vengeance there; for

every act of injustice and oppression goes to Heaven and pleads for vengeance.” [ST186x 20.2](#)

(f.) “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; and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” [ST186x 21.1](#)

Such are the solemn and sublime scenes that transpire under the sixth seal. And a thought well calculated to awaken in every heart an intense interest in divine things, is the consideration that we are now living amid the momentous events of this seal. [ST186x 21.2](#)

Between the fifth and sixth seals there seems to be a sudden and entire change in the language, from the highly figurative to the strictly literal. Whatever may be the cause of this change, the change itself cannot well be denied. By no principle of interpretation can the language of the preceding seals be made to be literal; nor can the language of this any more easily be made to be figurative. [ST186x 22.1](#)

The first event under this seal, perhaps the one which marks its opening, is a great earthquake. As the more probable fulfillment of this prediction, we refer to the great earthquake of 1755. [ST186x 22.2](#)

“The great earthquake of Nov. 1, 1755, extended over a tract of at least 4,000,000 of square miles. Its effects were even extended to the waters in many places where the shocks were not perceptible. It pervaded the greater portion of Europe, Africa, and America; but its extreme violence was exercised on the southwestern part of the former. In Africa this earthquake was felt almost as severely as it had been in Europe.” — *Sears’ Wonders of the World*, pp. 50, 58, 381. [ST186x 22.3](#)

The Encyclopedia Americana states that this earthquake extended also to Greenland; and of its effects upon the city of Lisbon, further says: “The city then contained about 150,000 inhabitants. The shock was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one-fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence, for the space of nearly three days, that the city was completely desolated. [ST186x 22.4](#)

The events which follow the great earthquake under the sixth seal are the special signs, in the sun, moon, and stars, of the second coming of Christ. The dark day and dark night of 1780 are described in these words: “The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.” The moon, that was full the day before, appeared through the darkness of the night like a ball of blood. This was the appearance as presented to the prophet. [ST186x 23.1](#)

“It was not the blackness of a storm-cloud, such as sometimes with a frightful agitation breaks over a single city; it was the silent spreading of the pall cloth over the earth by strong, invisible hands.” — *Concord (N. H.) People*. [ST186x 23.2](#)

Webster, in the edition of his dictionary for 1869, says of the dark day: “The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known. [ST186x 23.3](#)

The prophetic description of the falling stars had a literal fulfillment in the meteoric shower of November 13, 1833, which was unlike any other on record in appearance, extent, and magnitude. “Those which appeared in the east, fell toward the east; those which appeared in the north, fell toward the north; those which appeared in the west, fell toward the west, and those which appeared in the south, fell toward the south. They fell not as the *ripe* fruit falls — far from it; but they flew, they were *cast*, like the unripe fruit, which at first refuses to leave the branch.” — *Henry Dana Ward*. [ST186x 23.4](#)

The falling of the stars is the last special sign upon which believers base their faith in the near second advent. The departing of the atmospheric heaven is after the close of probation. This seems evident from the fact that the affrighted multitudes, in despair of the mercy of the Lord, direct their cries to mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. [ST186x 24.1](#)

While the book of Daniel has to do with four universal monarchies, Babylon, Persia, Grecia, and Rome, and its several chains of prophecy bring us, with wonderful definiteness, to the day of God, the second coming of Christ, and the last judgment, the book of Revelation pertains to the fourth, Rome, and its several lines of prophecy bring us down, with equal minuteness, to the same point, and open before us the naked glare of eternal scenes.