

SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS

1. What question did the disciples ask the Saviour upon a certain occasion? Matt. 24:3.
2. Will signs of the end be seen in the heavens? Joel 2:30, 31; Luke 21:25-27.
3. By what convulsion of nature are these signs introduced? Rev. 6:12-14. Note 1.
4. What sign is to appear in the sun? After what is it to be seen? Matt. 24:29.
5. How definitely does Mark locate this sign? Chap. 13:24.
6. What tribulation is here referred to? How was it shortened? Why? Matt. 24:21, 22. Note 2.
7. When did this darkening of the sun occur? Note 3.
8. What sign was next to be seen in the heavens? Matt. 24:29. Note 4.
9. What sign was to be seen in the stars? Matt. 24:29, 30; Rev. 6:13.

10. When was this sign fulfilled? Note 5.

11. What illustration is given us of the nearness of the end? Matt. 24:32, 33.

12. How near will the end be when these signs in the heavens are all fulfilled? Verse 34. Luke 21:28-32.

13. How sure are these words? Luke 21:33.

14. What solemn exhortation to watchfulness is given? Verses 34-36; Matt. 24:42-44.

NOTES

1. This is doubtless the great earthquake of Nov. 1, 1755, known as the "Lisbon earthquake." It extended over a tract of land of 4,000,000 square miles. Europe, Africa, America, the West Indies, and as far north as Greenland, felt its effects. Mountains were shaken to their foundations, and 90,000 persons are said to have perished in Lisbon alone. One writer says: "The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept; it was beyond tears."

2. The tribulation here mentioned is that of the Dark Ages caused by the papal supremacy. It began in A.D. 538, when the decree of Emperor Justinian went into effect, which made the pope the head of the church and the corrector of heretics, and ended at the end of the prophetic period of 1260 years (Dan. 7:25) in A.D. 1798. The days ended in 1798; the persecution, because of the Reformation, was shortened about twenty years. This sign was to be in those days, but after the persecution.

3. Webster's Dictionary, edition 1869, says: "The Dark Day, May 19, 1780. — So called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England. . . .The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known."

"The dark day in northern America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain." —*Herschel*.

"The 19th of May, in the year 1780, I well remember. I was then in my sixteenth year. The morning was clear and pleasant, but somewhere about eight o'clock, my father came into the house and said there was an uncommon appearance in the sun. There were not any clouds, but the air was thick, having a smoky appearance, and the sun shone with a pale and yellowish hue, but kept

growing darker and darker, until it was hid from sight. At noon we lit a candle, but it did not give light as in the night, and my father could not see to read with two candles."

— *Milo Bostwick, Camden, N. J., March 3, 1848.*

4. "At eight o'clock in the evening the darkness was so impenetrably thick as to render traveling positively impracticable, and, although the moon rose nearly full about nine o'clock, yet it did not give light enough to enable a person to distinguish between the heavens and the earth."

— *Great Events of the Greatest Century, page 44.*

"A great part of the following night also (May 19, 1780) was singularly dark. The moon, though in the full, gave no light, as in our text."

— *Sermon by Rev. Elam Potter, May 28, 1780.*

5. "But the most sublime phenomenon of shooting stars, of which the world has furnished any record, was witnessed through the United States on the morning of the 13th of November, 1833. The entire extent of this astonishing exhibition has not been precisely ascertained, but it covered no inconsiderable portion of the earth's surface. . . . The first appearance was that of fireworks of the most imposing grandeur, covering the entire vault of heaven with myriads of fire-balls, resembling sky-rockets. Their coruscations were bright, gleaming,

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and incessant, and they fell thick as the flakes in the early snows of December. To the splendors of this celestial exhibition the most brilliant sky-rocket and fireworks of art bear less relation than the twinkling of the most tiny star to the broad glare of the sun. The whole heavens seemed in motion, and suggested, to some, the awful grandeur of the image employed in the Apocalypse, upon the opening of the sixth seal, when 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."

—*Burritt's Geography of the Heavens, page 163, edition 1854.*

"Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a small black cloud had appeared, about half as large as a man's hand, which we all knew was the sign of the Son of Man." — *Early Writings, page 11.*