NOTES
ON
THE GOSPELS:
PRINCIPALLY DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND BIBLE CLASSES.
BY
REV. ALBERT BARNES.
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12.
give decisive evidence of attachment to me, and shall enter into heaven.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

They were not permitted to throw away their lives. Where they could preserve them without denying their Lord, they were to do it. We are to preserve our lives by all proper means; but rather die, than save ourselves by doing any thing wrong. 'Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel,' &c. That is, in fleeing from persecutors, from one city to another, you shall not have gone to every city in Judea, till the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish economy. See note on Matt. xxiv. 28—30. By the coming of the Son of man, that is, of Christ, is probably meant the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened about thirty years after this was spoken. The words are often used in this sense. See Matt. xxiv. 30. Mark xiii. 26. Luke xxi. 23—32.

24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. 25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

'The disciple is not above his Master,' &c. That is, you must expect the same treatment which I have received. See Matt. xii. 24. Luke xi. 15. John viii. 48. 'Beelzebub,' or Beelzebul, was a god of the Ekronites. See 2 Kings i. 2. The word literally means the god of flies, so called because this idol was supposed to protect them from the numerous swarms of flies with which that country abounded. The word also signified, among the Jews, the god of filth, and was esteemed as the lowest and most offensive of all the idol gods. Hence the name was given to the leader, or prince of all the devils, Luke xi. 15. Mark iii. 22. By giving the name to Christ, they poured upon him the greatest possible abuse and contempt.

26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

'There is nothing covered,' &c. It is probable that this declaration was a proverb among the Jews. By it our Saviour meant, that their innocence, their principles, and their integrity, though then the world might not acknowledge them, yet, in due time, should be revealed. They were to be willing to be unknown,
26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

To gain the whole world means to possess it as our own,—all its riches, honours, and pleasures. Those who are striving to gain the world, and are unwilling to give it up for the sake of religion, will lose their souls. If the soul is lost, nothing can be given in exchange for it, or it can never afterwards be saved. There is no redemption in hell.

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

'For the Son of man,' &c. That is, the Lord Jesus Christ shall return to judge the world. 'Reward.' He will deal with them according to their characters. This fact, that he will come to judgment, Christ gives as a reason why we should be willing to deny ourselves and follow him. Even though now it should be attended with contempt and suffering, yet then he will reward his followers for all their shame and sorrows, and receive them to his kingdom. He adds, Mark viii. 38, that if we are ashamed of him here, he will be ashamed of us there. That is, if we reject and disown him here, he will reject and disown us there.

28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

'Taste of death.' That is, die. See John viii. 51—53. Before they die they shall see this. 'Son of man coming in his kingdom.' Mark and Luke have explained this, Mark ix. 1: 'Until they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.' Luke ix. 27; 'Till they see the kingdom of God.' The meaning is, till they should see Christ's kingdom, that is, his church, now small, feeble, and despised, greatly enlarged, established, and spreading with great rapidity and extent. All this was accomplished. All these apostles, except Judas, lived to see the wonders of the day of Pentecost; some of them, John particularly, saw the gospel established in a large part of the known world. It will not be long before he will come. At any rate, it will not be long before we shall meet him. Death is near. And then we must stand before him, and give an account of the deeds done in the body.

CHAPTER XVII.

1 AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart,
temple, properly so called, the sanctuary, and the altar of burnt-offering in the court of the priests. See the description of the temple, Matt. xxi. 12. 'Upon this generation.' The destruction of Jerusalem took place about forty years after this was spoken. See the next chapter.

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

'O Jerusalem,' &c. See note, Luke xix. 41, 42. 'Would I have gathered.' Would have protected and saved. 'Thy children.' Thy people.

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

'Your house.' The temple. The house of worship of the Jews. The chief ornament of Jerusalem. Desolate. About to be desolate, or destroyed. To be forsaken as a place of worship, and delivered into the hands of the Romans, and destroyed. See notes on chapter xxiv.

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

'Ye shall not see me,' &c. The day of your mercy is gone by. I have offered you protection and salvation, and you have rejected it. You will not see me as a merciful Saviour, offering you redemption any more, till you have borne those heavy judgments. They must come upon you, and be borne, until you would be glad to hail a deliverer, and say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be he that comes as the Messiah, to bring deliverance. This has not been yet accomplished, but the days will come when the Jews, long cast out and rejected, will hail Jesus as the Messiah, and receive him whom their fathers slew, as the merciful Saviour, Rom. xi. 25—32.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1 AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple, as he takes his final leave of it, and teaches what were the signs of his coming. These predictions are also recorded in Mark xiii. Luke xxi. 5—38.

'And Jesus went out.' He was going to the mount of Olives,
CHAPTER XXIV.

ver. 3. 'The buildings of the temple.' The temple itself, with the surrounding courts, porches, and other edifices. See note, Matt. xxi. 12. Mark says, that they particularly pointed out the stones of the temple, as well as the buildings. 'In that temple,' says Josephus, the Jewish historian, 'were several stones which were forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth,' seventy feet long, ten wide, and eight high. Those stones, of such enormous size, were principally used in building the high wall on the east side, from the base to the top of the mountain.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

'There shall not be left here one stone upon another.' At the time this was spoken, no event seemed more improbable than this. Yet in the short space of forty years all this was exactly accomplished. Jerusalem was taken by the Roman armies, under the command of Titus, A. D. 73. The account of the siege and destruction of the city is left us by Josephus, an historian of undoubted veracity and singular fidelity. He was a Jewish priest. In the wars of which he gives an account, he fell into the hands of the Romans, and remained with them during the siege and destruction of the city. Being a Jew, he would of course say nothing designed to confirm the prophecies of Jesus Christ. Yet his whole history appears almost like a running commentary on these predictions respecting the destruction of the temple.

After the city was taken, Josephus says, that Titus gave orders that they should now demolish the whole city and temple, except three towers, which he reserved standing. But for the rest of the wall, it was laid so completely even with the ground by those who dug it up from the foundation, that there was nothing left, to make those believe who came hither, that it had ever been inhabited.' Titus was desirous of preserving the temple; and frequently sent Josephus to the Jews to induce them to surrender, and save the temple and city. But the prediction of the Saviour must be fulfilled. The Jews themselves first set fire to the porticoes of the temple. One of the Roman soldiers, without any command, threw a burning firebrand through a window, and soon the temple was in flames. Titus gave orders to extinguish the fire; but amidst the tumult, none of his orders were obeyed. The soldiers pressed to the temple, and neither fear, nor entreaties, nor stripes, could restrain them or control them; and thus, says Josephus, the temple was burnt against the will of Cæsar.

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?

' He sat upon the mount of Olives.' Note, Matt. xxii. 12. From that mount there was a magnificent view of the whole city. 'The disciples came unto him privately.' Not all of them, but Peter, James, John, and Andrew, Mark xiii. 3. The prediction that the temple would be destroyed, ver 2, had been made in the presence of all the apostles. A part now came privately to know more particularly when this would be. 'When shall these things be?' &c. There are three questions here: 1. When those things should take place. 2. What should be the signs of his coming. 3. What should be the signs that the end of the world was near. These questions he replies in this and the following chapters. He does, intermixing the descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the end of the world. The principle on which this combined description of two events was spoken, appears to be, that they could be described in the same words, and, therefore, the accounts are intermingled. A similar use of language is found in some parts of Isaiah, where the same language will describe the return from the Babylonish captivity, and deliverance by the Messiah. 'Sign of thy coming.' Evidence that thou art coming. By what token shall we know that thou art coming.

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

They were to be constantly on their guard, as many would arise to deceive the people. 'Many shall come in my name.' In the name of the Messiah, or claiming to be the Messiah. 'I am Christ,' I am the Messiah. Many would lay claims to being the Messiah, and, as he was universally expected, many would easily be led to believe in them. There is abundant evidence that this was fully accomplished. Josephus informs us that there were many who, pretending to Divine inspiration, deceived the people, leading out numbers of them into the desert. 'The land,' says he, 'was overrun with magicians, seducers, and impostors, who drew the people after them, in multitudes, into solitudes and deserts, to see the signs and miracles which they promised to show by the power of God.' The names of twenty-four false Messiahs are recorded as having appeared between the time of the emperor Adrian and the year 1682.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

'And ye shall hear of wars,' &c. It is recorded in the histories
of Rome, that the most violent agitations prevailed in the Roman empire previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. Four emperors, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellus, suffered violent deaths in the short space of eighteen months. Parties were formed; and bloody and violent wars were the consequence of attachment to the particular emperors. This is the more remarkable, as at the time that the prophecy was made, the empire was in a state of peace. 'Rumours of wars.' Wars declared, or threatened, but not carried into execution. Josephus says, that Bardanes, and after him Volageses, declared war against the Jews, but it was not carried into execution. He also says that Vitellus, governor of Syria, declared war against Aretas, king of Arabia, and wished to lead his army through Palestine, but the death of Tiberius prevented the war. 'The end is not yet.' The end of the Jewish economy; the destruction of Jerusalem will not immediately follow.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

And there shall be famines.' There was a famine foretold by Agabus, Acts xi. 28, which is mentioned as having occurred, by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Eusebius; and which was so severe in Jerusalem, Josephus says, that many people perished for want of food. Four times in the reign of Claudius (A. D. 41—54), famines prevailed at Rome, Palestine, and Greece. 'Pestilences.' Raging, epidemic diseases. The plague, sweeping off multitudes of people at once. A pestilence is recorded as raging in Babylonia, A. D. 40; in Italy, A. D. 66. Both of these took place before the destruction of Jerusalem. 'Earthquakes.' Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudius, at Rome, and says, that in the reign of Nero, the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse were overthrown; and the celebrated Pompeii was overwhelmed, and almost destroyed by an earthquake. 'The beginning of sorrows.' Far heavier calamities are yet to come before the end.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

'To be afflicted.' By persecution, imprisonment, scourging, &c. 'They shall deliver you up to councils.' (Mark.) To the great council, or sanhedrim, for this is the word in the original. Note, Matt. v. 22. This was fulfilled when Peter and John were brought before the council, Acts iv. 5—7. Mark further adds, xiii. 9, that they should be delivered to synagogues, and to prisons, to be beaten, and should be brought before rulers and kings, for his name's sake. All this was remarkably fulfilled. Peter and John were imprisoned, Acts iv. 3; Paul and Silas also, Acts xvi.
24. They were also beaten, xvi. 23. Paul was brought before Gallio, Acts xviii. 12, before Felix, xxiv. 24, and before Agrippa, xxv. 23. 'And shall kill you.' That is, shall kill some of you. Stephen was stoned, Acts vii. 59; James was killed by Herod, Acts xii. 2. And in addition to all that the sacred writers have told us, the persecution under Nero took place before the destruction of Jerusalem, in which Peter and Paul were put to death, with many others. Most of the apostles, it is believed, died by persecution.

When they should be delivered up, Jesus told them not to premeditate what they should say, for he would give them a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries could not gainsay or resist, Luke xxii. 14, 15. The fulfilment of this is recorded in the case of Stephen, Acts vi. 10, and of Paul, who made Felix tremble, Acts xxiv. 25. 'Ye shall be hated of all nations.' It was judged to be a crime to be a Christian. Multitudes for this, and for nothing else, were put to death. 'For my name's sake.' On account of attachment to me; or because you bear my name as Christians.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

'Many shall be offended.' See note, Matt. v. 29. Many shall stumble, fall, apostatize, from a profession of religion. Many who professed to love me, shall then show that they had no real attachment to me. See 1 John ii. 19. 'Shall betray one another.' Those who thus apostatize from professed attachment to me, shall betray others who really love me. This they would do to secure their own safety, by revealing the names, habitations, or places of concealment of others. 'Shall hate one another.' Not that real Christians would do this, but those who had professed to be such, shall then show that they were not, and shall hate one another. Luke adds, that they should be betrayed by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends. They would break through the most tender ties to surrender Christians to punishment. This, in the persecutions of Christians, has been often done; and nothing shows more fully, the deep and deadly hatred of the human heart to the gospel.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Josephus says, the tyrannical zealots who ruled the city, suborned many false prophets to declare that aid would be given to the people from heaven. This was done to prevent them from attempting to desert, and to inspire confidence in God.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

The effect of all this would be, that the ardour of feeling of
many christians would be lessened. The word 'wax' means, to become. It is an old Saxon word, not used now in this sense, except in the bible. The fear of death, and of treason, and the deluding influence of false teachers, would lessen the zeal of many timid and weak professors; perhaps also of many feeble christians.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

He that bears afflictions, persecutions, &c. faithfully; that constantly adheres to his religion, and does not shrink till death, shall be saved, or shall enter heaven. So Luke, xxi. 18, says, there should not a hair of the head perish; that is, they should be saved. A hair of the head, or the smallest part or portion, is a proverbial expression, denoting the certainty and completeness of their salvation. Luke, xxi. 19, further adds, 'In your patience possess ye your souls.' That is, keep your souls patient; keep proper possession of patience as your own. It is a part of religion to teach it; and in these trying times, let it not depart from you.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

The evidence that this was done is to be chiefly derived from the New Testament, and there it is clear. Thus Paul declares, that it was preached to every creature under heaven, Col. i. 6, 23; that the faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole world, Rom. i. 8; that he preached in Arabia, Gal. i. 17, and at Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, Rom. xv. 19. We know also, that he travelled through Asia Minor, Greece, and Crete; that he was in Italy, and probably in Spain and Gaul, Rom. xv. 24—28. At the same time, the other apostles were not idle; and there is full proof that within thirty years after this prophecy was spoken, churches were established in all these regions. 'For a witness unto all nations.' Hitherto the blessings of revelation had been confined to the Jews. They were the peculiar people of God. His messages had been sent to them only. When, therefore, God sent the gospel to all other people, it was a proof, or a witness unto them, that the peculiar Jewish economy was at an end. 'Then shall the end come,' The end of the Jewish economy. The destruction of the temple and city.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

'The abomination of desolation.' This is a Hebrew expression, meaning an abominable or hateful destroyer. The Gentiles were all held in abomination by the Jews Acts x. 28. The abo-
mination of desolation, means the Roman army; and is so explained by Luke, xxi. 20. 'Spoken of by Daniel the prophet.' Dan. ix. 26, 27; xi. 31; xii. 11. 'Standing in the holy place.' Mark says, standing where it ought not, meaning the same thing. All Jerusalem was esteemed holy, Matt. iv. 5. The meaning of this is, when you see the Roman armies standing in the holy city, or encamped around the temple, or the Roman ensigns or standards in the temple. Josephus further relates, that when the city was taken, the Romans brought their idols into the temple, and placed them over the eastern gate, and sacrificed to them there. Whoso readeth,' &c. This seems to be a remark made by the evangelist, to direct the attention of the reader particularly to the meaning of the prophecy by Daniel; but Doddridge thinks it the observation of Christ.

16 Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:

Then Christians may know that the end is come, and should seek a place of safety. Destruction would not only visit the city, but would extend to the surrounding part of Judea. 'The mountains.' The mountains of Palestine abound in caves, a safe retreat for those pursued. In all ages these caves were the favourite places of robbers; and were also resorted to by those in danger, 1 Sam. xiii. 6; xxii. 1. 2 Sam. xxiii. 13. Josh. x. 16. In those mountains they would be safe.

17 Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

The roofs of the houses in eastern countries were made flat, so that they were convenient places for walking and retirement, and most commonly the stairs were so placed that persons could descend from the house-tops to the streets, without going into the house. See note, Matt. ix. 1—8. The meaning here is, that he who should be on the house-top when this calamity came upon the city, should flee without delay; he should not even take time to secure any article of apparel from his house. 'Clothes' here means the outer garment, commonly laid aside when men worked or ran. See note, Matt. v. 40. These directions were followed. It is said that the Christians, warned by these predictions, fled from the city to Pella, and other places beyond Jordan; so that there is not evidence that a single Christian perished in Jerusalem.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter neither on the sabbath day:
CHAPTER XXIV.

The destruction was certainly coming. It could not be prevented. Yet it was right to pray for a mitigation of the circumstances; that it might be as mild as possible. 'In the winter.' On account of the cold, storms, &c. To be turned then from home, and compelled to take up an abode in caverns, would be a double calamity. 'Neither on the sabbath-day.' Journeys were prohibited by the law on the sabbath, Ex. xvi. 29. The law of Moses did not mention the distance to which persons might go on the sabbath; but most of the Jews maintained that it should not be more than two thousand cubits, or nearly a mile. This distance was allowed, in order that they might go to their places of worship. Jesus teaches them to pray that it might not be on the sabbath, because if they should not go further than a sabbath day's journey, they would not be beyond the reach of danger; and if they did, they would be exposed to the charge of violating the law. It should be added, that it was almost impracticable to travel in Judea on that day, as the gates of the cities were usually closed, Nch. xiii. 19—22.

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The word 'tribulation' means calamity, or suffering. Luke, xxi. 24, has specified in what this tribulation should consist. 'They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.' That is, until the time allotted for the Gentiles to do it shall be fully accomplished.

The first thing mentioned by Luke is, that they should fall by the edge of the sword. That is, should be slain in war, as the sword was then principally used in war. This was most strikingly fulfilled. Josephus uses almost the very words of our Saviour. 'All the calamities,' says he, 'which had befallen any nation from the beginning of the world, were but small in comparison with those of the Jews.'

He has given the following account of one part of the massacre when the city was taken. 'And now rushing into the city, they slew whomsoever they found, without distinction, and burnt the houses and all the people who had fled into them. The whole city ran with blood, insomuch that many things which were burning were extinguished by the blood.' He adds, that in the siege of Jerusalem, not fewer than eleven hundred thousand perished. In the adjacent provinces no fewer than two hundred and fifty thousand are reckoned to have been slain; making in all, the almost incredible number of one million three hundred and fifty thousand, who were put to death. These were not indeed
all slain with the sword. Many were crucified. 'Many hundreds,' says he, 'were first whipped, then tormented with various kinds of tortures, and finally crucified; until at length the multitude became so great, that room was wanted for crosses, and crosses for the bodies.' So terribly was their imprecation fulfilled—' His blood be on us and on our children,' Matt. xxvii. 25. If it be asked how it was possible for so many people to be slain in a single city, it is answered, that the siege of Jerusalem commenced during the time of the passover, when all the males of the Jews were required to be there, and when it is estimated that more than three millions were usually assembled.

A horrible instance of the distress of Jerusalem is related by Josephus. A woman of distinguished rank, having been plundered by the soldiers, in hunger, rage, and despair, killed and roasted her babe, and had eaten one half of him before the deed was discovered. (Jewish Wars, b. vi. ch. 3, sec. 3, 4.) This cruel and dreadful act was also a fulfilment of prophecy, Deut. xxviii. 53, 56, 57.

Another thing added by Luke, ch. xxi. 24, was, that they should be led captive into all nations. Josephus informs us that the captives taken during the whole war amounted to ninety-seven thousand. The tall and handsome young men Titus reserved for his triumph; of the rest, many were distributed through the Roman provinces, to be destroyed by wild beasts in theatres, many were sent to the works in Egypt; many, especially those under seventeen years of age, were sold for slaves.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

If the calamities of the siege should be lengthened out. If famine and war should be suffered to rage. 'No flesh be saved.' None of the nation would be preserved alive. All the inhabitants of Judea would perish. The war, famine, and pestilence would entirely destroy them. 'But for the elect's sake.' The 'elect' here doubtless means Christians. See 1 Pet. i. 2. Rom. i. 7. Eph. i. 4. 1 Thess. i. 4. It is probable that in Jerusalem and the adjacent parts of Judea, there were many who were true followers of Christ. On their account; to preserve them alive, and to make them the instruments of spreading the gospel, he said those days should not be lengthened out, and suffered to produce their destruction. It is related by Josephus, that Titus at first resolved to reduce the city by famine. He therefore built a wall around it, to keep any provisions from being carried in, and any of the people from going out. The Jews, however, drew up their army near the walls, engaged in battle, and the Romans pursued them, provoked by their attempts, and broke into the city; so that,
CHAPTER XXIV.

contrary to his original intention, he pressed the siege, and took the city by storm, thus shortening the time that would have been occupied in reducing it by famine. This was for the benefit of the elect. See Isa. x. 7. Gen 1. 20.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

‘Lo here is Christ.’ The Messiah. The Jews expected the Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression. In the time of these great calamities they would anxiously look for him. Many would claim to be the Messiah. Many would follow them. ‘Believe it not.’ You have evidence that the Messiah has come, and you are not to be deceived by the plausible pretensions of others.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; in so much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

‘False Christs.’ Persons claiming to be the Messiah. ‘False prophets.’ Persons claiming to be the prophet spoken of by Moses, Deut. xviii. 15; or pretending to declare the way of deliverance from the Romans, and calling the people to follow them. See ver. 5. ‘Shall show great signs and wonders.’ That is, shall pretend to work miracles. Josephus represents the false Christs and prophets that appeared as magicians and sorcerers. He says, they led the people out into the deserts, and promised to work miracles to deliver them. ‘If possible would deceive,’ &c. So nearly would their pretended miracles resemble true miracles, as to render it difficult to detect the imposition; and as, if possible, to persuade even true christians that they were the Messiah. But that was not possible. They would be too firmly established in the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, to be wholly led away by others.

25 Behold, I have told you before.

Mark adds, ch. xiii. 23, Take ye heed. The reason why he told them before, was that they might be on their guard, and be prepared for these calamities.

26 Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

‘Behold, he is in the desert.’ The Jews had formed the expectation that the Messiah would appear suddenly, from some unexpected quarter. Accordingly, most of the impostors and pretended prophets led their people into the deserts. ‘Go not forth.’ Do not follow them. They will only deceive you. ‘In secret
27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Many would be looking for him in the desert; many in secret places. But it would be useless to be looking in that manner. It was useless to look to any particular part of the heavens, to know where the lightning would next flash. In a moment it would blaze in an unexpected part of the heavens, and shine at once to the other part. So rapidly, so unexpectedly, in so unlooked for a quarter would be his coming. See Luke x. 18. Zech. ix. 14.

'The coming of the Son of man.' It has been doubted whether this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, or to the coming at the day of judgment. Those two events are the principal scenes in which our Lord said he would come, either in person or in judgment. They in many respects greatly resemble each other. They will bear, therefore, to be described in the same language. These words may have a primary reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, but also such an amplitude of meaning as to express his coming to judgment.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

The words in this verse are proverbial. Vultures, which seem here referred to, easily ascertain where dead bodies are, and come to devour them. So with the Roman army. Jerusalem is like a dead and putrid corpse. Its life is gone, and it is ready to be devoured. The Roman armies will find it out. Jesus would come by means of them, as certainly, as suddenly, and as unexpectedly, as whole flocks of vultures, though unseen before, suddenly find their prey, and quickly gather in multitudes around it. So would the Roman armies discover Jerusalem, a putrid carcase, and hasten to destroy it.

29 ¶ 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, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

These images are often used by the sacred writers to denote any great calamities. Any great catastrophe, any overturning of kingdoms or cities, or dethroning of kings and princes, is represented by the darkening of the sun and moon, and by some terrible convulsion in the elements. Thus the destruction of Babylon is foretold in similar terms, Isa. xiii. 10; of Tyre, Isa. xxiv. 23. The slaughter in Bozrah and Idumea is predicted in the same language, Isa. xxxiv. 4. See also Isa. 1. 3;
CHAPTER XXIV.

To the description in Matthew, Luke has added, ch. xxi. 25; 'there should be distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth.' All these are figures of great and terrible calamities. The roaring of the waves of the sea, denotes great tumult and affliction among the people. Perplexity means doubt, anxiety: not knowing what to do to escape. Men's hearts should fail them for fear, or by reason of fear. Their fears would be so great as to take away their courage and strength.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

'The sign of the Son of man.' At the destruction of Jerusalem, the sign, or evidence of his coming, was found in the fulfilment of these predictions. At the end of the world, the sign of his coming will be his personal approach with the glory of his Father and the holy angels, I Thess. iv. 16. Luke xxi. 27. Matt. xxvi. 64. Acts i. 11. 'All the tribes of the earth mourn.' All the wicked shall mourn at the prospect of their doom, Rev. i. 7. The cause of their wailing at the day of judgment shall be that they have rejected the Saviour, and deserve the condemnation that is coming upon them, John xix. 37. Zech. xii. 10. 'And they shall see the Son of man.' The Lord Jesus coming to judgment. 'In the clouds of heaven.' He ascended in a cloud, Acts i. 9. He shall return in like manner, Acts i. 11. 'The clouds of heaven' denote not the clouds in heaven, but the clouds that appear to shut heaven, or the sky, from our view. 'With power.' Power, manifest by consuming the material world, 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10, 12; by raising the dead, John v. 29, 30. 1 Cor. xv. 52; by changing those who may be alive when he shall come; that is, making their bodies like those who have died, and been raised up, 1 Thess. iv. 17. 1 Cor. xv. 52; by bringing the affairs of the world to a close, receiving the righteous to heaven, Matt. xxv. 34. 1 Cor. xv. 57; and by sending the wicked, however numerous or however strong, down to hell, Matt. xxv. 41, 46. John v. 29. 'Great glory.' The word, 'glory' here means the visible display of his honour and majesty, Matt. xxv. 31; xxvi. 64.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
The word 'angels,' most commonly refers to the race of intelligences more exalted than man, who are employed often in the work of man's rescue from ruin, and his salvation, Heb. i. 14. They will gather together the elect, at the day of judgment. 'With a great sound of a trumpet.' The Jewish assemblies used to be called together by the sound of a trumpet, as ours are by bells, Lev. xxi. 9. Num. x. 2. Judges iii. 27. Our Saviour, speaking to Jews, described the assembling of the people at the last day, in a way which would be peculiarly clear and impressive to them. Similar language is often used, when speaking of the judgment. 1 Thess. iv. 16. 1 Cor. xv. 52. A trumpet, or horn, was a wind instrument, made at first of the horns of oxen, and afterwards of rams' horns, cut off at the smaller extremity. In some instances it was made of brass in the form of a horn. The common trumpet was straight, made of brass or silver, a cubit in length, the larger extremity shaped so as to resemble a small bell. In times of peace, in assembling the people, this was sounded softly. In times of calamity, or war, or any great commotion, it was sounded loud. Perhaps this was referred to when our Saviour said, 'with a great sound of a trumpet.' 'They shall gather together his elect.' See on ver. 22. 'The word means christians: the chosen of God. It implies, that he will send his angels to gather his chosen, his elect, together from all places, Matt. xiii. 39, 41—43. This shall be done before the living shall be changed, 1 Cor. xvi. 51, 52. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. 'From the four winds.' That is, from the four quarters of the globe: east, west, north, and south. The Jews expressed those quarters, by the winds blowing from them. See Ezek. xxxvii. 9. See also Isa. lxiii. 5, 6. 'From one end of heaven,' &c. Mark says, xiii. 27, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven. The expression denotes that they shall be gathered from all parts of the earth where they are scattered.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

'Now learn a parable.' See note, Matt. xiii. 3. The word here means, rather an illustration. Make a comparison, or judge of this as you do respecting a fig-tree. 'Fig-tree.' This was spoken on the mount of Olives, which produced not only olives, but figs. 'When his branch,' &c. When the juices return from the roots into the branches, and the buds swell and burst, as if tender, and too feeble to contain the pressing and expanding leaves. When you see that, you judge that spring and summer are near.
In the same manner, when you see what I have predicted, the signs around Jerusalem, then know that its destruction is at hand. 'Is near.' Luke says, xxii. 28, that your redemption draweth nigh, and, xxii. 31, the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Your deliverance from the dangers that threaten the city approaches, and the kingdom of God will be set up in the earth.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

'This generation.' This age; this race of men. A generation is about thirty or forty years. The destruction of Jerusalem took place about forty years after this was spoken. See note, Matt. xvi. 28. 'Till all these things,' &c. Till these things shall receive a full accomplishment. He does not mean to exclude here the reference to the judgment, but to say that the destruction of Jerusalem would be such as to make the words of the prediction appropriate, were there nothing beyond. But there was a fulness of signification that would meet also the events of the judgment, the meaning of which would not be filled up till the world was closed.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

You may sooner expect to see the heaven and earth pass away and return to nothing, than my words to fail.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only

Of the precise time of the fulfilment. The general signs of its coming have been given; as the budding of the fig-tree is a certain indication that summer is near. But the precise time is not indicated by these things. 'Knoweth no man, no, not the angels,' &c. Mark adds, xiii. 32, 'neither the Son.' He was man as well as God. As man, possessed of a human soul, he must have the properties of a human soul, and, among the rest, limited knowledge. Thus it is said, he increased in wisdom, Luke ii. 52. As man, therefore, he might be ignorant of a future event, which his Father had not chosen to communicate to him. A passage of the same kind is found in John iii. 13: 'he that came down from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven.' In heaven, in regard to his Divine nature; on earth in his human nature. So in his Divine nature he knew the day and hour of the destruction of Jerusalem; in his human nature he was ignorant of it.

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

'Noe.' The Greek way of writing Noah. See Gen. vi. vii. viii. ix.
38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark.

It does not mean that these things were wrong, but only that such was their actual employment, and that they were regardless of what was coming upon them.

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

That is, they knew not the exact time, until it came upon them. 'So,' says he, it shall be when the Son of man shall come. They shall not know the precise time until he comes, and then they shall be found so engaged in the ordinary business of life as to be unconcerned about the Divine threatenings.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

'Then shall two be in the field,' &c. The calamity shall come suddenly. There shall be no escape for those whom it overtakes. 'One shall be taken.' The word 'taken' means to be taken away by death.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Grinding in the east was performed, as it is now, chiefly by hand. The mill-stones were about two feet in diameter, and half a foot in thickness. The lower one was fixed, and the upper one was turned by a handle, or crank. This was done by two persons, who sat opposite to each other. One took hold of the mill handle, and turned it half way round; the other then seized it, and completed the revolution. This was done by women; by servants of the lowest order; and was a very laborious employment. See Ex. xi. 5. Isa. xlvi. 2. Judges xvi. 21. The meaning of this verse is similar to the former. Of two persons sitting near to each other, one shall be taken, and the other left. The calamity would be sudden, and would come upon them before they were aware.

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

'Watch.' Be looking for his coming. Watch the signs of his coming, and be ready.

43 But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he
CHAPTER XXIV.

would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

If a man knew the hour, or about the hour when a robber would come, he would be ready for him. So you know not the exact hour, but you know it is near, when the Son of man will come. He will come suddenly, as a thief comes, without giving previous warning, 1 Thess. v. 2. 2 Pet. iii. 10. Rev. iii. 3; xvi. 15. 'Good man.' See Matt. xx. 11. 'Thief.' A robber. The original word means one who does it by house-breaking, or by highway violence, Luke x. 30. 'Broken up.' Broken into—either by the doors or windows. 'In what watch.' In which of the four quarters of the night. See note, Matt. xiv. 25.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think, not the Son of man cometh.

Luke, xxi. 36, says that he charged them to pray always, that they might be accounted worthy to escape those things—the judgments coming upon the wicked; and to stand before the Son of man—that is, to stand there approved by him, or admitted to his favour. He also charged them, Luke xxi. 34, to take heed and not to suffer their hearts to be overcharged with surfeiting, or too much eating, or drunkenness, or the cares of this life, lest the day should come upon them unawares; things improper if there were no judgment—peculiarly mad and wicked when the judgment is near.

45 Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

This passage (ver. 45—51) is in fact a parable, though it is not expressly so called. The design is to show that his disciples should act as if they were each moment expecting his return. 'Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant,' &c. By the conduct of a faithful and wise servant he intends to denote a faithful christian, a servant of God, or a teacher of religion. 'Whom his lord.' His master. Applied to christian teachers, in the spiritual meaning of the parable, it refers to Christ, who has appointed them as teachers, and who is their Lord and Master, John xiii. 13, 14. 'Over his household.' His family. Christian ministers are the servants of God appointed over the church, the family of Christ, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. 1 Cor. iii. 5; iv. 1, 2; xii. 28. 'Meat in due season.' The word 'meat' here means all kinds of provisions requisite to support and nourish life. 'In due season.' At the proper time. As they need it, or in the accustomed times. This was the office of a steward. Applied to christian ministers, it means that they are to feed the flock of God, to minister to their wants, and to do it as they need it, John xxii. 15—17. Acts xx. 28.
46 Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

' Shall make him ruler,' &c. This is a circumstance of the parable or story, designed to show the effect of faithfulness. Faithful servants of Christ shall be rewarded. This will be done by his approbation, and by the rewards of the heavenly world.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

' That evil servant.' If that servant, so appointed, having this office, should be evil or wicked. ' Say in his heart.' Secretly suppose. ' Delayeth his coming.' Will not return in a long time; or does not return as soon as was expected, and perhaps may not at all.

49 And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

' Smite his fellow-servants,' &c. This is designed to represent the conduct of ministers who should be unfaithful, overbearing, and abusing their trust in the church.

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

' Shall cut him asunder.' This kind of punishment was anciently practised. Sometimes it was done by the sword, sometimes by saws. It was practised among the Chaldeans, Dan. ii. 5; iii. 29; among the Hebrews, 2 Sam. xii. 31. 1 Sam. xv. 33. Heb. xi. 37. It was also practised by the Egyptians and Romans. It here signifies, that the wicked servant shall be severely punished. ' Hypocrites.' See note, Matt. vi. 2. They are spoken of here as the worst of men. ' Weeping and gnashing of teeth.' See note, Matt. viii. 12, 13. The unfaithful and wicked minister of God, who lives without expectation or fear of judgment, shall suffer the severest punishment inflicted on sinners in the world of woe.

CHAPTER XXV.

1 THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

' Then shall the kingdom of heaven.' The phrase here refers to his coming in the day of judgment. ' Shall be likened.' Or
shall resemble. The meaning is, it shall be, when the Son of man returns to judgment, as it was in the case of ten virgins in a marriage ceremony. The coming of Christ to receive his people to himself is often represented under the similitude of a marriage—the church being represented as his spouse or bride. The marriage relation fitly represents the union of believers to Christ. See Matt. ix. 15. John iii. 29. Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 9. Eph. v. 25—32. 'Ten virgins.' These virgins, doubtless, represent the church—a name given to it because it is pure and holy. See 2 Cor. xi. 2. 'Which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.' The lamps used on such occasions were rather torches or flambeaux. They were made by winding rags around pieces of iron or earthenware, sometimes hollowed so as to contain oil, and fastened to handles of wood. These torches were dipped in oil, and gave a strong light. Marriage ceremonies in the east were conducted with great pomp and solemnity. The ceremony of marriage was performed commonly in the open air, on the banks of a stream. After the ceremony, succeeded a feast of seven days if the bride was a virgin, or three days if she was a widow. This feast was celebrated in her father's house. At the end of that time the bridegroom conducted the bride, with great pomp and splendour, to his own home. This was done in the evening or at night, Jer. vii. 34; xxv. 10; xxxiii. 11. Many persons attended them; and besides those who went with them from the house of the bride, there was another company that came out from the house of the bridegroom to meet them and welcome them. These were probably female friends and relatives of the bridegroom, who went out to welcome him and his new companion to their home. These are the virgins mentioned in this parable. Not knowing precisely the time when the procession would come, they probably went out early, and waited by the way till they should see indications of its approach.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish,
3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

'And five of them were wise.' The words wise and foolish, here, refer to their conduct in regard to the oil. The one part was wise in taking oil, the other foolish in neglecting it. The conduct of the wise refers to those who are prepared for the coming of Christ; prepared by possessing real piety, and not merely profession. The conduct of those without oil expresses the conduct of such as profess to love him, but are destitute of true grace, and are unprepared to meet him. In this parable the scope is to teach us to watch or be ready, ver. 13. It is not to teach us the number of those who shall be ready, and those who shall not. There is no authority for saying that our Lord meant to teach