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AS CONTAINED IN
MATTHEW XXIV, & XXV.

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CONSIDERED;

WITH NOTES AND APPENDIX.

BY

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THE PROPHECY OF THE LORD JESUS

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The few days that immediately preceded the crucifixion, was the period in which we find the Lord Jesus entering more fully than ever before into free and confiding intercourse with His disciples. Jerusalem, blinded with Sacerdotalism and by the traditions of men (even as Christendom now is), had finally rejected Him; but His disciples, though few and feeble, adhered to Him still. Partners in His rejection, they found their reward in being treated as His friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what His Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

On the first day of the week in which the Passover was to be killed, Jesus had entered Jerusalem, riding on the ass’s colt. It was His solemn presentation of Himself to Jerusalem as her King: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." On the day following, He discoursed for the last time in the Temple; pronounced woe
upon the Jewish teachers; and then, finally quitting the city, retired to the Mount of Olives, His disciples following Him.

It was during the time that intervened between His thus retiring from the city and His crucifixion, that the prophetic discourses recorded in the concluding chapters of John, and in the 24th and 25th of Matthew, were delivered. The same separated company received them at the same period, under the same circumstances. I say prophetic, because in John, as well as Matthew, the Lord treated of the future history of His disciples after His departure, and after the Comforter had come. In both, He regards them as the separated family of God, left for a season here, to serve Him in an earth that had despised and rejected Him. In John, He speaks of their heavenly standing, and of their fruit-bearing relation to the Father and to Himself. In Matthew, He treats of the outward circumstances in Israel and in the nations, in the midst of which their service was to be. In John, they were taught principally respecting themselves—their own privileges and their own blessings. In Matthew, they learned the character of the things around them, in the midst of which they had to serve; for the Church, although brought into union and fellowship with the Father and the Son, and seated in heavenly places in its risen Head, is, nevertheless, left in the earth for a season, there to eat the bitter book of prophetic knowledge, and in the power of Divine intelligence thus communicated (whilst preaching the Gospel of the grace of God) to testify also
"against ἐπὶ peoples, and nations, and tongues, and many kings." See Rev. x. 11.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," &c., were the words with which the Lord Jesus concluded His personal ministry in Jerusalem, and then quitted the city, weeping over it as He left it. Yet, although leaving it to its desolation, He does not conclude His sorrowful denunciation without adding words of hope and consolation for any who might have ears to hear. "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." He does not say that Jerusalem shall never see Him again. He says that a time shall come when she shall see Him again, and say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." It is a quotation from one of the millennial Psalms of Israel. It is Israel's salutation of the Lord, their Messiah, when He comes to bless them, arising as the sun, "with healing in His wings."

But now the Lord left Jerusalem and all that was therein, and went as one whom "man despised, and the nation abhorred," to the Mount of Olives. Let us also leave it. Let us go with our Master "without the gate." Let us stand by the side of Him whom Jerusalem and the world rejected. All that was ecclesiastically great, and all that was secularly great—the priestly courts of Caiaphas and the imperial halls of Cæsar, Jesus left behind Him in Jerusalem; His soul "loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Him." See Zech. xi. 8. He stood therefore, not only separate from them all, but rejected by them all. His disciples
now, as His disciples then, have to share His reproach, and the reproach of His Truth, even as He has given them to share with Him His blessedness and joy above the heavens. None but they who followed Jesus to the Mount of Olives were privileged to hear the instruction of these chapters. Nicodemus heard it not—he preferred to linger in the Sanhedrim. And so it is now. The separate and the rejected place is the place in which alone the words of prophecy are heard and valued. We are not to linger in the place that Jesus abandons; we are not to be fascinated by the attractiveness of the ways and works of men, for they are fashioned by the hand of Satan, and are fast ripening for their doom. If we voluntarily tarry in the midst of the circle of the world's glory; if our hearts linger there; if we countenance the world's religiousness; if (though believing in Jesus as the Saviour) we refuse to stand, as it were, by His side, in the midst of men, owning Him as the true and faithful Witness, we shall be utterly unprepared to receive His prophetic words. Daniel was separate from the king's meat, and was afterwards given to hear the secrets of God.

But the disciples carried their own hearts with them even when they followed Jesus without the gate. Separation around their Master had not separated them from themselves. They began to admire the Temple and its goodly stones over which He had wept. They shared not His thoughts; they understood not the reason of His sorrow. He saw their want of communion with Himself, and He felt it; yet He did not upbraid them. "See ye not," said He, "all these
things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Such was His gentle admonition, as He sought to lead them into further light.

To us, also, He is willing to show like mercy, although blindness in us is worse than blindness in them, because we have received of the Pentecostal Spirit, and live in fuller and clearer light. But if we harden ourselves against His Word; if we wilfully blind ourselves to the future, and forget the doom pronounced upon corrupt Christendom (see Rom. xi. 22) and upon Israel and upon the proud cities of Gentile greatness; if we carelessly lie down under the shadow of trees that are about to be cut down by God's hand in wrath, can we expect fellowship with Him then? May we not rather expect to receive the stroke of His chastening rod, or else to be allowed to wander on into deeper darkness? Lot was a believer, yet Lot was well nigh ruined in the ruin of Sodom. Jonathan loved David, yet Jonathan fell with Saul on the mountains of Gilboa. Certainly we have blinded ourselves to the future; and the present condition of Christendom, from end to end, evidences the disastrous consequence. Shall we continue in this blindness, or shall we repent of it before it is too late?

And now, if we ask, as the disciples did, "What shall be the sign of the Lord's coming, and of the end of the age?" let us read this prophecy, and we shall receive the Lord's own reply.

The first division of His prophetic answer is from the 4th to the 14th verse inclusive. This part of the pro-
Prophecy is wide and general both as to sphere, time, and circumstances. It presents an outline of the whole period during which the Lord Jesus remains absent from the earth. It is the habit of Scripture to teach in this way; first to give the outline, then to supply details; and this of course involves recurrence, that is, a retracing, in part or altogether, the same subject,—new circumstances being added without the sphere being enlarged. Many have quite overlooked this, and have read Scripture as if the order of narration were always the order of accomplishment, and as if consecutive chapters were necessarily consecutive as to time. But if Scripture be so read, confusion and mistake are certain.*

Accordingly, the end of the 14th verse of this chapter brings us to the close of the age; and even the end of the 25th chapter carries us no further as to time. We are furnished with more detail; many important particulars are added about the age and about its end, but we are not carried beyond that end.

These verses then, containing a brief but clear description of the state both of the world and of the professing Church during the period of the Lord's absence, may be divided as to their subjects thus:—After

* We have a remarkable instance of this mode of instruction in the 1st and 2nd chapters of Genesis. The first chapter gives a rapid and comprehensive history of the whole work of creation until its accomplishment, and the rest of the seventh day. The second chapter recurs again to the same subject, and we find a description of the creation of Eve from the side of Adam.
slightly alluding in the 4th and 5th verses to the false Christ and alarming rumors that should arise in Judæa immediately after His departure, and expressly stating that these things were NOT the signs of the end, the Lord further describes the character of the lengthened period that should intervene between His departure and His return,—a period which has already measured more than eighteen centuries, and yet the end has not come. First, He speaks of the relation of the nations one to another throughout the whole earth. Instead of that relation being millennial, as the disciples had expected, instead of nation ceasing to rise against nation, “nation,” He says, “shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” Next, He speaks of the governmental relation of God to the world. Instead of its being one of peace, instead of His “opening His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing,” He sends from time to time, “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes”—a plain evidence of the earth’s continued wickedness and need of chastisement, seeing that God hath no pleasure in destruction; “He never afflicted willingly nor grieved the children of men.” Next, the relation of nations to the Church is spoken of: “They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” He speaks also of the declension and evil that would be found even within the Church itself. Because of persecution many would be offended: many false teachers also would arise: because of the abounding of iniquity, the love of the greater part (των πολλῶν) even of true believers would wax cold;
and endurance, rather than the lively energy of zealous service would characterise the close. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Nevertheless, the Gospel should continue to be preached; and after it had been sufficiently preached as a witness, the end should come. Such is the picture of our Dispensation. Violence and wasting among the nations: destructive judgments inflicted from time to time by the hand of God: hatred and persecution of the Church: declension of the Church: yet still the Gospel preached as a witness (observe the words, "as a witness"), and then the end. Such, I repeat, is our Lord's own description of the Dispensation in which we live. Has any description ever been more fully verified by facts than this?

And yet the gradual spread of universal peace, and the progressive improvement of the world and of the Church have been the idolised doctrines of the day. The millennial parts of the Word of God are appealed to in evidence thereof; and thus the very light of the Scripture is turned into darkness. Men gladly forget, when they wish it otherwise, that Isaiah is speaking of the Millennium—Christ, of the present age. They willingly remember that Isaiah has said, "nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" but they turn from the equally plain declaration of the Lord, "nation SHALL rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." Facts also testify in vain; for when were nations more skilful and more earnest than at present in learning war, and in fabricating instruments of destruction? Have they,
indeed, ceased to learn war any more? And when did the worldliness and idolatrous corruptions of professing Christianity testify more loudly to the abounding of iniquity? And has not love waxed cold? Yet how has this prophecy been gainsayed? Men, and even Christians, have persisted in speaking and teaching otherwise.

There have already been periods, when, because of abounding iniquity and corruption of Truth, God has suddenly allowed the flood-gates of evil to be opened, and blasphemous infidelity to set in like a torrent. France, at the time of the Revolution, affords one memorable example. Infidel blasphemy developed itself, as in a moment, in the very heart of professing Christendom. And so it will be again, only in a far wider sphere, and with accompaniments far more terrible. God has said, that the hour is coming when He will send upon men "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie;" and that hour is fast hastening on. The sphere will not be Paris, or any one Gentile country merely, but in Jerusalem and Judæa, and in all the full extent of the Roman World. It is the condition of Judæa and Jerusalem at this coming period (a period that is now drawing nigh) that forms the subject of the next division of this prophecy from the 15th to the 28th verse inclusive.*

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of

* For proof of the futurity of this division of the chapter, see Notes at end.
desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, * stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand): then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains," &c. Although eighteen hundred years have passed since the Lord Jesus uttered these words, the abomination of which He spake has not yet stood in

There are two reasons why the "setting up of the abomination of desolation," which is the evidence of the maturity of Anti-christian apostasy in Jerusalem, should be mentioned here. In the first place, the disciples had asked for the sign of His coming. All the events mentioned in the ten preceding verses had been too general in their character, and too prolonged in their duration to be any specific sign of the end. The abounding of iniquity, for example, in the professing Church, has prevailed too long for it to be any definite indication of the end. It is not, therefore, until the second division of the chapter that the Lord speaks of the definite sign of His coming. That sign is the setting up by Antichrist of his idol in Jerusalem; the consequent infliction on the land of Israel of a tribulation, "such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, nor ever shall be;" and that tribulation immediately followed by the manifestation of the Lord in glory.

In the second place, the gospel of Matthew, as a whole, and this prophecy in particular, is concerned with the history of Christendom; that is to say, those who profess the name of Jesus whilst Israel is rejecting Him. And we could hardly expect that the history of Christendom should be touched on without the wonderful fact being mentioned of the very heart and centre of it, that is to say, all the Ten Kingdoms of the Roman World becoming apostate, and "breaking asunder the bands" both of God and of Christ. It is in consistency, therefore, with the scope of the Gospel of Matthew to record this apostasy of the centre of Christendom.
the holy place. But the whole of prophetic Scripture concurs in showing that the Jews again returning to Jerusalem in unbelief (and this event will probably soon occur) will there re-build their Temple and re-establish their sacrifices, but without God. Accordingly, His hand will again be stretched out against them. He will allow them to fall into the hands of the last great king of the Gentiles. "Lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still, but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces." He will blaspheme God and Christ; pollute the Temple; take away the daily sacrifice; "and plant the abomination that maketh desolate; and upon the pinnacle of abominations [i.e., the idolatrous pinnacle] shall be the desolator* even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured on the desolator."

I do not dwell here upon the history of this person—Antichrist. Elsewhere I have considered it fully.† I will only here state that "abomination" in Hebrew is the name for an idol. We learn from the Book of Revelation, that an idol of Antichrist will be made and worshipped; and the place where it will be worshipped is marked by Daniel, and by the Lord Jesus, as being the Temple at Jerusalem. And why should

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* Such is the literal translation of Dan. ix. 27.

† See "Prospects of the Ten Kingdoms of the Roman World," as advertised at end.
we marvel at this? Even now Christendom is teeming with idolatry from one end of it to the other; and if within our own memory, the inhabitants of the most polished city in the earth, consented to bow down and worship a harlot in the face of day, why should we be surprised at hearing of a reign of blasphemy in Jerusalem, and of an idol being worshipped there? Superstition ending in infidelity, and infidelity ending in the idolatry of greatness, is the characteristic feature of the present hour. The elevation of this image will be the embodiment and closing act of the iniquity of this age. It will be the avowed establishment of Atheism. Man will worship man; and God will be openly rejected and blasphemed.

Until this climax of iniquity, Christianity and Christian testimony will have lingered around Jerusalem; but as soon as the idol is set in the holy place, it will be instantaneously withdrawn. All the disciples of Jesus are commanded immediately to depart—so suddenly, that they are directed to pray that neither the hindrance of the Sabbath,* nor the inclemency of winter, might be allowed to delay or impede the rapidity of their flight. They are commanded to abandon Judæa, as well as Jerusalem, instantly; to flee to the mountains; to find a refuge, if necessary, in dens and caves of the earth—not because of terror from man, not because hostile armies are, as of old, about to encompass Jerusalem (for no such armies are mentioned here), but because God is about to interfere, and

* See remarks on this in the Notes that follow.
to send upon that land and city a time of tribulation, "such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." The vision respecting the vials of wrath in the Revelation, may be referred to as an exposition of the character of that hour, and sufficiently shows the reason of that merciful interposition that allows to the servants of Jesus deliverance from its terrors.

It is true, indeed, that this commandment to quit Jerusalem and Judæa can be addressed only to a few, because, howsoever many of the servants of Christ may be in Judæa then, they will necessarily be few in comparison with the multitude of their Christian brethren who will be scattered up and down throughout the earth, "from one end of heaven to the other." Yet, although not ourselves in Judæa, the history of these, our Christian brethren, is important and interesting to us, not only because they are our brethren—not only because they will be dwelling in the place where the mystery of iniquity, which has been so long working, finds the focus of its development, but still more because the tribulation which is to be in that land and city, is the constituted sign of the end of the age, and of the appearing of the Lord in glory: for the words of the Lord Jesus are—"IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall 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; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man
coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 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."

These words are too plain to need any comment. The disciples had asked, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" The answer is, The unequalled tribulation is the sign. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened," &c. No word can be more definite than immediately. It is the emphatic word of the chapter.

It is not the object of the 24th of Matthew to give the history of this season of tribulation, or to describe the condition of Jerusalem. This prophecy is not addressed to Jerusalem or its people. They had been left, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, to reap the consequences of their rejection of their King; and this, their season of tribulation, is only referred to here because it is to be a sign to the Church; otherwise it would have been passed in silence by. In the Old Testament, however, and in the Revelation, we find its history fully given. "In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them," are alike the words of Jeremiah and John. (See Jer. viii.; Rev. ix.) This season of unequalled tribulation, thus specially sent by the hand of God in chastisement, immediately precedes the personal mission of His Son in vengeance, when He shall come, the armies of heaven following
Him: and, therefore, fearful as that hour of tribulation will be (so fearful, that all whom Jesus acknowledges as His, are bidden to flee from the spot on which it is to fall), yet the wrath and utterly destroying judgment which immediately follows it on the appearing of the Son of Man in His glory, will be infinitely more terrible. "Then shall all the tribes of the land wail." Then "shall they go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Isaiah ii. 19. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us; and to the hills, cover us." Luke xxiii. 30.

The outpouring of this wrath, however, is not described in this chapter. It speaks of the unequalled hour of tribulation in Jerusalem that precedes the advent of the Lord: it describes the appearing of the Lord in glory and the mission of the angels to gather together His elect (that is, His own believing people) from the four winds; but it says nothing of what follows on Jerusalem and the earth, both being at that time the subjects of His wrath; though among the Jews, and among the heathen also, a remnant are to be spared: for, as I have already said, Jerusalem and the Jews are not the theme of this prophecy. They have been left in the preceding chapter, and they are only referred to here for the sake of others, that is, ourselves—Christians, to whom their history is a sign. Their history is only given in this chapter so far as it is a sign to the Church; and when the Church is taken from the earth, the historic part of the chapter
ends. Not one word is said either of the wrath or of the subsequent blessing that will be poured upon Jerusalem. Both wrath and blessing will follow in their course, but we must look to other parts of Scripture for instruction as to this. The only act mentioned here as performed by the Lord Jesus on the earth, is the gathering together His saints; for this is His first act, when He descends into the air from heaven, and therefore they are safe with the Lord for ever; before the stroke of His wrath falls either on Jerusalem or on the earth. During the time of tribulation which precedes His coming, they, as of old, are guided by the word of Christ and by His shepherd care, to mountains of refuge. "Then let them that are in Judæa flee unto the mountains:" when He comes taking vengeance, He gathers them to Himself before the stroke of His judgment is given.*

It is blessed, indeed, to be assured that before the Lord Jesus executes any wrath, He will gather all His saints unto Himself. This will be His first act. He

* In the prophetic descriptions of the latter day, it is needful to distinguish carefully, 1st. The persecutions of the Man of Sin which will prevail, more or less, throughout all the kingdoms of the Roman Earth; 2ndly. The unequalled season of tribulation in the Land of Israel; and, 3rdly. The destructive judgments inflicted by the Lord Jesus at His coming. The saints are on the earth during the first two, though they escape the second—at least, all who are obedient to the Lord and flee. They will be taken from the earth before the last are inflicted.

It is obvious that Christians at large will be little distressed by either of the first two classes, for seeing that the bulk of Christianity will be found in countries external to the Roman
will do this before He descends to the earth to tread "the wine-press of the wrath of God," for He will be met by His saints in the air. They will meet Him, and "come with Him." During the previous season of tribulation that will be sent on Jerusalem and the land of Israel, His saints will, under the guidance of His words, find, as of old, a place of refuge. A Pella will be provided for them. When He appears in His glory to execute the appointed vengeance, they will be gathered to Him "from one end of heaven to the other." We are commanded to watch for the premonitory signs that shall indicate this consummation. "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 we shall see all these things [that is, the tribulation in the land of Israel, and the signs in the sun, and moon, and stars, &c.,] know that it [my coming] is near, even at the doors."

World, neither the persecution nor the tribulation will extend to them; and if their sympathies are narrow, and their hearts careless, they will think very little about either.

Some have asked whether the gathering together of the elect may not mean the gathering together of Israel for Millennial blessing; but this is impossible: first, because Israel is to be gathered, not by angels, but by Gentiles "on litters, mules, and swift beasts;" whereas, we learn from the 13th of Matthew that the Church are distinctively gathered by angels. Secondly, the gathering of Israel is an act of blessing; but at the period spoken of here, the Lord is about to pour on them rebuke and fiery indignation. Even the spared remnant are made to pass through the fires.
You may say, perhaps, It is easy to watch for those signs. But is it so? What chapter has been more used to hinder watchfulness than this?—for is it not commonly believed to be fulfilled, at least all the sign part of it? The unequalled season of tribulation, for example, is said to have taken place eighteen hundred years ago, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. These signs are said to have taken place then; and if we believe this, can we be watching for them now? Could anything more completely defeat the very object of the Lord in teaching us these things, than the notion that they have already been accomplished ages ago? Yet this is the way in which light is made darkness; and the very words that are intended to guide, are turned into instruments to blind.

"Let no man therefore deceive you by any means."

We are expressly commanded by the Lord Jesus Himself to watch not only for His return, but for the signs of His return. Nor, indeed, is it possible to watch according to His commandment in any other way. We cannot cancel these words—"Now learn a parable of the fig-tree."

Thus, then, a reply had been given, full, simple, and distinct, to the enquiry of the disciples respecting the sign of His "coming, and of the end of the age." They had asked respecting the end of the age as thinking it nigh,—aware, as having learned it in the Prophets, that an unparalleled season of transgression, both among the Gentiles and among the Jews, would be found in Jerusalem at the end. They thought that this consummation of iniquity was near; being as yet
entirely ignorant of the new feature that was about to be added to the age by their own ministration. They already knew something about the prophetic history of Jerusalem and the Gentile nations as given in Daniel; but of Christendom, of which they themselves were about to become the founders, they were altogether ignorant. They knew nothing of this lengthened period, during which a new body has been called out in the earth, who, at the period of the Lord's return, will be neither Jews, nor Antichristian Apostates, nor Heathen, but professors of the name of Jesus. Their history it is that gives its most important moral feature to the age during the last eighteen hundred years; for even the mystery of iniquity itself, which ends in the full development of Antichristianism, receives that development in the very bosom of Christendom—mainly cherished by influences that have thence emanated. Antichristianism, having Jerusalem for its centre, will spread over all the kingdoms of the Roman world. But Christianity, however weakened and corrupted, will continue to exist in other parts of the earth. Multitudes will still retain the profession of the name of Christ, and it is their history that forms the subject of the remainder of this prophecy to the end of the twenty-fifth chapter. We are here taught the moral aspect of Christendom at the time of the end.

If we imagine some vast and rugged waste that had never yielded to the cultivating hand of man, we have an emblem of what the world was when Christianity was first introduced into it. The cedar, or the fir tree,
or the oak of Bashan, might be seen here and there in the midst of it; but all was barrenness and wildness in the sight of God. And if we suppose a fair field of wheat suddenly to arise in the midst of this barren waste, and seeming to promise a joyful and abundant harvest, we should have a picture of what Pentecostal Christianity once was: and if again we were to see this fruitful spot spoiled by the intermingling of spurious seed, introduced secretly by some hostile hand, and yet were to see the marred and mingled field advancing still on every side, and gaining from day to day upon the barren tract around, we should see an emblem of what Christendom has been and still is: and if we looked again, and saw in the very centre of this mingled field, a mass of thorns and briars suddenly arise and choke both wheat and tares together throughout a wide, though not unlimited extent, we should see a picture of what Christendom will be, when its very centre, i.e., the Ten final kingdoms of the Roman World, will have apostatized from profession even of the name of Christ and of God, and will have bowed down to Antichrist.

All these spheres are referred to in this discourse; for the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters form one connected prophecy. We have already heard respecting the Apostate centre. We have now to consider the condition of that part of Christendom which does not become Apostate. What will be its condition at the close? The Lord speaks of it under four aspects: first, the servants over the household: secondly, the wise and foolish virgins: thirdly, the parable of
the talents: fourthly, the gathering and separation of the sheep and the goats.

If we were to regard only those parts of Scripture which describe the condition of that part of the earth in which Antichristianism will reign, or if we regarded only the appearances at present exhibited, not only in the Roman World, but generally throughout Christendom, we might perhaps despair of true Christianity, at least in a collective form, being anywhere preserved. All that does not remain in the darkness of Heathenism, seems to be giving itself over either to Infidelity or to Sacerdotalism; and if Christianity does not perish under the assaults of the one or the other of these engines of Satan, it will be a marvel as great as the bush which Moses saw burning, but not consumed.

And yet so it will be. True Christianity will not perish from the earth, no, not even at the hour of the age's greatest blasphemy. One special object of the concluding part of this prophecy is to teach us that it will remain up to the hour when the Lord Jesus returns in His glory, retaining the exercise of its peculiar functions as well as its ostensibly separate position; for there will be servants over the household; and servants trading with their talents; and virgins who have gone forth with their lamps.

It is not my intention to speculate on the means by which the Lord may effect the preservation of that which, if we judged merely from present appearances, would seem likely soon to be swallowed up by the advancing floods of ungodliness. It can scarcely, I think, be doubted, that some increased power of Truth will
be required, to enable Christianity to retain such a standing as is implied in the parable of the virgins or of the talents, at a time when Satan will be allowed to kindle the full blaze of Antichristian glory in the Roman World, and to give their full power of seductiveness to the principles of the mystery of evil. And as, at the Reformation, God interfered, and Truth was revived, adapted to the emergencies of the time, so, I doubt not, as the great hour of Satan draws nigh, there will be a revival of Truth necessary to meet the increased intensity of delusion. And may not this revival have begun? Are not the doctrines of the return of the Lord Jesus in glory and of the earth's prospects in connection therewith, and a better knowledge of the Church's heavenly standing, and a clearer knowledge of the character of the Church's calling and of its heavenly standing in Christ, and of the need of its being brought into a more pure and pearl-like separateness in the earth, producing some effect in counter-working the deadly principles of the approaching crisis of iniquity? And if this testimony should be committed to persons more faithful and more earnest than those who may have in measure already borne it (and in the Revelation we do read of some who, in an especial manner, "keep the commandments of God," and "the faith of Jesus," and "the testimony of Jesus," at the closing hour of this age of evil)—if the testimony should be committed to such, more marked results will doubtless follow. But not to pursue this subject; in whatever way Christianity and Christian Truth may be preserved, or whatever new
energy may be infused into it, we find that it will not be exempted from that which has ever been its characteristic in this dispensation—unsound profession and evil in its midst. There is the faithful and wise servant, but there is also the evil servant over the household. The foolish virgins are mingled with the wise: the wicked and slothful servant is in possession of the talent: the sheep and the goats are found together.

In imparting the knowledge of these things, the Lord Jesus so teaches as to bear morally on the souls of His disciples, that they might be stimulated to watch and to serve. Thus, after describing the mad and wicked revelry of the ungodly, "as it was in the days of Noah," He says, "watch ye therefore;" and then proceeds to speak of His household, and of the wise servant over it, as if to set in strongest contrast the place of curse, and the place of blessing. Again, after describing one aspect of the professing Church as marked by general slumber—"they all slumbered and slept," He once more repeats, "Watch ye therefore," and adds the parable of the talents, as if to indicate the approved place of diligence during that hour of sleep. In the first of these passages His servants are set in contrast with the ungodly and blaspheming world; in the second, with the professing Church itself.

Nothing can be more marked than the contrast between the place of the wise and faithful servant, and the world's riot and revelry at that closing hour. Unmoved by anything that has occurred in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel—unsoftened as was the heart
of Pharaoh by all the wonders of the Lord—heedless of every sign, they will be hardened and careless as in the days of Noah—full of that spirit of lawlessness which will have said both of Jehovah and of Christ, "Let us burst their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Consider, then, the character of this profanity and riot; view the nations as drunk with the wine of Satan's mingling, and compare therewith the place of the watching, wise, faithful servant over the household, employed diligently in giving to each his portion of meat in due season. How marvellous to think of a household still remaining to Christ in proximity to such evil! Yet there is a drawback even here. Few sights could be more blessed, when iniquity is thus lifting up its horn on high, than to behold the household of Christ standing forth in purity and blamelessness—all the stewards duly ministering, and all the household duly fed. But such a sight we are not to see. The wicked servant will be there—the servant who uses his knowledge respecting his Lord's delay for the encouragement of riot and evil—"feeding himself, and not sparing the flock." Such, probably, will be the general character of ministry at the close; for the ministry of Christendom has ever furnished the darkest page of Christendom's history. Yet it will not be the universal character. Some true and faithful servants will still be found, for else the Lord would not have used words which imply that reward, even the reward of being over all His goods, will be given to some at His return.

But the servants of Christ have to watch, not merely
because they are in proximity to the riot of an ungodly world—they have also to watch because they live at an hour when slumber has fallen even upon the Church. The kingdom of heaven, that is, the professing Church, will stand in marked, and in a certain sense, blessed contrast with the apostate nations, for it will still contain something that grace will acknowledge as its own. The character which the Church originally had when it first took its stand in the midst of the nations as waiting for the Lord, will, as far as ostensible separateness of position goes, continue attached to it on to the very end; but it will be the separation of slumberers; nor will the light of the prophetic word, nor the progress of evil, nor the interferences of the Lord in the land of Israel, break the slumber in which all the virgins, both wise and foolish, together sleep. They will sleep on through all, even till the very hour when the tokens of His near presence enable every lip to say, “Behold, He cometh”—when no heart will doubt, because every eye will see. Then it is that they awake; but it is evidently awaking to hurry and surprise. They have both to order and to kindle their lamps; and they find, what apparently they never recognised before, the unprepared condition of their wretched companions, to whom it is now too late to say, “Go ye and buy.” The whole scene must be one of surprise and trial of spirit; otherwise the Lord would not have added these closing words, “Watch ye, therefore.” It is equivalent to saying, “Slumber ye not; be not as the virgins.”
In contrast, apparently, with this condition of slumber, the parable of the talents is next given. We are not to slumber as the virgins—we are to trade with our talents: and the trading of course implies watchfulness and energy. The servant diligently trading, seems placed in contrast with those who slumber. There will therefore be found some who, while the Lord tarries, occupy diligently till He comes. It is not ministerial service merely; it is not the place of the servant over the household; it is a place open to all saints of using for the Lord whatever they have received, if it be but the mammon of unrighteousness—of using it for His glory. It is cheering to think of some thus actively and diligently employed in trading for the Lord, whilst others give themselves over to antichristian blasphemy, or else slumber. Yet here again the picture is darkened. There was one professed servant, conscious of having received something from the Lord, conscious also of a certain degree of responsibility contracted thereby, who, not because of having been overtaken by slumber, but in wakeful and deliberate purpose of soul, refuses to use his talent for the Lord, because he says, that he knows his Lord's character to be hard, exacting and austere—one, therefore, whom he cannot, and will not, attempt to serve. It is the saying of one ignorant of God—ignorant of grace. How contrary to the spirit of him who said, "By grace I am what I am. . . . I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." They who know God, and that savingly, may for a time slumber. They who, in
the power of real grace, having oil in their vessels, take the place of separation as the people of Christ, may, nevertheless, be found deficient in the energy of spiritual life. 'They may be but very partially aroused to the consciousness of all that they will be conscious of when it shall at last be said, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." They may shine but dimly in the midst of the surrounding darkness. They may even build "wood, hay, stubble," instead of "gold, silver, and precious stones" on the "one foundation." Yet their hearts never say of the Lord, "He is austere and hard, and we will not serve Him." Calm self-possession; much knowledge as to the character of the hour; a keen and censorious eye fixed on the slumbering Church; the ability to say much that is searching, much that is true, may perhaps be found among the characteristics of the evil servant, but accompanied by a total inability to appreciate those "mercies of God," whereby he might, notwithstanding all weakness, have presented himself and his powers as "a living sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing unto God." In a day of weakness like the present, it is well to remember that the Lord has said that "He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed till He send forth judgment unto victory."

The parable that follows fully answers the charge of the evil servant, and vindicates the ways of the Lord. There can be little of hard exaction in Him, who, when He comes, and all the holy angels with Him, and sits upon the throne of His glory, shall call before
Him all His flock—the sheep whom He has loved, and purchased by His own blood, and nurtured and fed with all the perfectness and tenderness of shepherd-care, and shall own them all, even the weakest of them, as His brethren, and shall say to each of them, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." There is little of exaction in this—little desire to depreciate the labours of His servants, or to gather where He has not strayed.

The scene here recorded belongs evidently to a period when He, who has long been exercising the lowly office of Shepherd, appears suddenly in glory as a King. And this we know is the very event which is to close this present age. It is the event that is to mark the conclusion of the present, and the commencement of the future, millennial, age. Moses before he became King in Jeshurun, was a long time separated alike from Egypt and from Israel (for he was rejected by both) and occupied himself by tending a flock in a wilderness. He was a shepherd, outcast by his own people, before he became the ruler of Israel. David also was taken from the sheep-folds. "He chose David also, His servant, and took him from the sheep-folds; from following the ewes great with young, He brought him to feed Jacob His people and Israel his inheritance." Accordingly, in this scene we find the Shepherd manifested in glory as the King.

His coming is described, not as being with His saints (for they are as yet upon the earth when He descends from heaven into the air), but as being with angels only. "When the Son of Man shall come in
His glory, and all the holy angels with Him.” Seeing then that His saints are with Him when He comes from the air to the earth; but that angels only are with Him when He descends from heaven into the air, I conclude that the throne of His glory here spoken of is in the air where the saints meet Him, and not upon the earth. The earth and its inhabitants lie, as it were, outstretched before Him. The air is the atmosphere that begirds the earth, and is therefore in close contiguity thereunto. “And before Him shall be gathered all the Gentiles”* (παντα τα εθνη). That is to say, Israel will not be gathered: Israel will not appear before Him; for they are not professedly His. They would not enter by the Door into the sheepfold. They despised the fold, and they despised the Shepherd. Consequently, they are not His flock, but are numbered amongst the tribes of whom it is elsewhere said, that they shall “wail against Him” when He cometh. These words—“all the Gentiles,” are therefore peculiarly emphatic, as denoting that His flock will not be found in Jerusalem or Israel, but among the Gentiles, and fitly conclude a prophecy which begins by His weeping over Jerusalem, and leaving it to its desolation.

Moreover, as the words, “all the Gentiles” exclude Israel, so do they exclude likewise the Heathen, Mohammedans, Antichristian Apostates—in a word, all

* Such is the strict translation. Nations are not gathered before Him, for then each sheep and each goat would represent a nation—not an individual.
who do not *professedly* belong to the fold of the one Shepherd. The flock of Christ at present is distinctively a Gentile flock. The expression "all the Gentiles," is in this passage limited by the context to those Gentiles who *confessedly* belong (whether as *sheep*, or whether as *goats*) to the fold of the great Shepherd. Like "wheat and tares" in the thirteenth of Matthew, these words denote only those who stand in an avowed and recognised relation to Him who is the Lord of the harvest, and the Shepherd of the fold. All the Gentiles, therefore, are gathered that come under the denomination of "sheep" or "goats," but no others. The heathen who "have never heard His fame, nor seen His glory" are not there: they will for the most part be spared and made the subjects of converting testimony. See Isaiah lxvi. 19, 20. The Apostates who follow Antichrist will not be there; for they, instead of being taken out of the earth to be punished (as the tares and goats will be) will first be subjected to a visible act of Divine judgment in the earth—being trodden in the winepress of wrath, and afterwards cast into the unseen place of torment. Consistently with all the parables that precede, those only are here mentioned *who profess the name of Christ.* And this is in accordance also with the scope of Matthew’s gospel as a whole; for the great subject of its prophetic testimony is, first, the formation of a new corporate witness in the earth, after Israel had been set aside; secondly, the *Gentile* character of this new witness; and thirdly, its failure, corruption, and final judgment. The parables of the thirteenth chapter,
and the parable of the marriage supper, are examples. Nor can we suppose it possible that a gospel which reveals the rejection of Jesus by Israel as their King; His consequent absence and secret relation to Gentiles as their Shepherd, should, when describing the end of the age, say nothing about the manner in which that Shepherd will act towards His flock when He suddenly appears as the King.

The scene is not one of judgment (κρίσις) properly so called. "He that believeth," saith the Lord, "shall never come into judgment." (κρίσις.) It is not the Assize of the Judge examining and passing final sentence on the arraigned, but is the throne of the King discriminating and severing between true subjects and false—the latter being reserved for the judgment of the great day. In that day, they who are here denominated goats, will stand with others who have died out of Christ, before the great white throne to be "judged out of things written in books according to their works." Their final sentence will not be passed on them till then. In the parable before us the sheep and the goats are not brought into the presence of the King that either might receive their final award. Nor are they gathered in order that it might be determined whether they are sheep or goats. Having been long known by the great Shepherd as such: as such they are separated, and their destiny announced. In principle, therefore, there is nothing different in this from the manner in which the righteous and the wicked are treated when now, from day to day, they are cut off by death. The award of the one is "to depart and be
with Christ;" of the other, to be reserved in torment until the judgment of the great day.

The expressed ground of the award (and it is revealed for our instruction, seeing that the principle on which the Lord Jesus will act then is the same that guides Him now, in His estimate of us)—the ground of the award is, the treatment of Himself as found in His people. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?"

Wonder, surely, will be the spontaneous feeling of all the saints when they shall stand in the presence of their King, and behold the majesty of His glory, and be told that He is the Person whom they have known, and visited, and ministered unto on the bed of sickness, in the cottage, or in the prison. Well may they say, "When saw we THEE?" How difficult we find it every day, even with all the light of this passage shining on us, practically to realise, that in ministering to Christ's people, we minister to Him.

This parable is also most important as revealing what the specific mark is that is fixed on by God as constituting the token of distinction between those who truly, and those who nominally belong to the everlasting fold. That mark is the desire and the habit of discriminating between the family of faith and all in the world besides; and of recognising the latter as having a paramount claim on the affections and services of all who love God. "As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, specially unto them who are of the household of faith." They who are taught of God know that the world is one thing, and the family of faith another. And although
they may very feebly realise the truth that Christ and His people are one, yet they desire and seek to love and to serve Christ’s people because they are Christ’s. Wherever this habit truly is (and what habit is there that should be more carefully cherished?) there is the token of our belonging to the “sheep,” and not to the “goats.” But if there be the habit of concealing, or cancelling (so far as in us lies) the everlasting distinction that God has constituted between the family of faith and all others—if we claim that men as men, or that baptized Christendom as such, should be entitled to the same place in our affections and services as is due to the family of God; if we refuse to draw resolutely the line of demarcation between unregenerate men and the true Church (whether those men have been, or have not been ritualistically consecrated) we do in that case take to ourselves the characteristic of the “goats,” and if we continue to bear that characteristic to the end, our doom is sure.

Such, then, are the solemn thoughts which Scripture teaches us to connect with the closing hour of Christendom: and Christendom, be it remembered, is the best part of the earth. Of the Apostate part of the earth, that is to say, that part of it that will then be Apostate under Antichrist, I here say nothing. Its judgment is elsewhere revealed. (See Rev. xix. 11, and similar passages.) But it will be the hour of the saints’ rest—the hour when they will together prove the reality of those words—“Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from HENCEFORTH; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”
NOTES.

Chapter xxiii. 38. "Ye shall not see Me henceforth TILL ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh," &c. These, the words with which the Lord Jesus closed His personal ministry in Jerusalem, are alone sufficient to prove that He will personally come to Jerusalem again, else He could not have used the word "TILL." "Ye shall not see Me TILL," &c. They also prove that a time will come when Israel shall nationally be converted how otherwise could they ever say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord"?

The force of the word "see" should be noted. Israel had for many years seen the Lord Jesus in the midst of them as the Minister of God to them for good. In that relation they were to see Him no more till they should say, "Blessed," &c. In another sense they saw Him when He was led away to be crucified. Words in Scripture are always to be defined by the context. That is a rule that should never be forgotten.

It is important to observe that Jerusalem and all her people, including even the remnant finally to be spared in Israel (for it is they who will at last say, "Blessed is He that cometh," &c.) are all left at the end of the twenty-third chapter, and are addressed no more. They are left to their desolation and judgment. In the twenty-fourth chapter not a word is said to them.
NOTES.

They are spoken OF, but they are not spoken TO. The body thus addressed in the twenty-third chapter is as diverse from that addressed in the twenty-fourth, as blessing is different from woe. The first were rejectors of Jesus—refusing to call Him blessed. They were the representatives of hardened, blinded, unbelieving Israel. But the others, that is to say, those addressed in the twenty-fourth chapter, were the disciples of Jesus. They had already called Him blessed. They were going without the gate bearing His reproach. Whilst blindness was resting upon Israel, they were to be His ministers, and His witnesses. They were to walk in light whilst the others were groping in darkness. They were addressed, therefore, not as the representatives of hardened, unbelieving Israel, or of Israel partially enlightened. They were addressed as the representatives of the Church of the living God. To them it had been said, “Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.” Having Christ they had all things. How important, therefore, to distinguish between the “ye” of the twenty-third chapter, and the “ye” of the twenty-fourth. In each case it is a corporate “ye,” and has already extended over nearly two thousand years.

Chapter xxiv. 1. “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple.”] It may, perhaps, seem to us wonderful that just at the very moment when the Lord’s ministry towards Israel had terminated so sorrowfully, His disciples, forgetful alike of His tears and of Israel’s doom, should instantly begin
to admire the very greatness upon which He had pronounced desolation. Yet we must take heed that we who believe in the truth of those coming judgments which the Prophets reveal, do not show the same want of fellowship with the thoughts of the Lord. When we behold the memorials of the greatness of this present age—its secular and ecclesiastical structures, its armies, its arts, its writings, and its civilisation, are we never tempted to admire these things, and virtually to forget the approaching day of visitation? "The day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low. . . . . And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Do we remember these words when we gaze admiringly on those things which are about to be swept with the besom of wrath? To the disciple of Christ the memorials of the world's greatness is the index of its doom.

Verse 2. "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Such was the reply of the Lord Jesus to the invitation of His disciples to admire those things on which His words had written desolation. By His reply He sought to check their wrong and fleshly admiration, and also to awaken in them some enquiry as to the nature of coming events. Accordingly, their admiration was checked; their thoughts were turned into a different channel, and they immediately asked,
“When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?” (αιῶνος.)

This, their question, was shaped according to their own thoughts; not according to what the Lord had said. The Lord had not said that the desolation of which He had spoken should occur at His coming, and at the end of the age. But they, well knowing that all the Prophets had declared that the Advent of the Messiah in glory should take place on a day of destructive judgment to Jerusalem (see Joel ii., and Zech. xiv.) very naturally, but erroneously inferred, that the destruction of the Temple of which He had spoken would be coincident with His coming and the end of the age. Hence the form of their question.

They were not wrong in associating “His coming” and “the end of the age,” for they will be coincident: nor were they wrong in believing that there would be at “the end of the age” a destructive visitation on Jerusalem. They were not wrong in expecting that the Advent of the Messiah in glory would be accompanied by judgment. But there was another previous destruction of Jerusalem, which, though referred to both by Moses and by Daniel, they were overlooking. Its then approaching overthrow by the Romans (an event with which we are so familiar, that in regarding it, we have well nigh lost all right thoughts respecting the future) was by them little anticipated. But they remembered (for all the Prophets had declared it) that a day of visitation on Jerusalem was to occur at “the end of the age,” when in the city would be left desola-
tion, and the gate be smitten with destruction (Is. xxiv. 12); when she should be "visited by the Lord of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise; with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire" (Is. xxix. 6,) and they knew that this day of her visitation should also be the day of her deliverance. They understood that the Advent of the Messiah in glory, the forgiveness of Jerusalem, and the prostration of the proud power of her Gentile enemies, were the events that would mark "the end of the age," and the introduction of another. They were hoping for this end of the age. Their cherished thought had been that it was nigh. Only the third or fourth day before this prophecy was given, it is said of them, that, "they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." See Luke xix. 11. They were still hoping that their Master would soon put forth His glorious power, destroy His enemies, and establish forgiven Israel. Of the character of this our Dispensation of sorrow and failure, which has already spread over more than eighteen hundred years, they were ignorant. This ignorance, the teaching of the Lord Jesus was intended to remove.

The Dispensation He was about to introduce, was most peculiar. Allowing the great Gentile nations to remain untouched in the possession of the power which had been delegated to them since the days of Nebuchadnezzar the first subverter of Israel, and permitting Israel to remain in all the consequences of their unbelief, He was about to call out, during the time of Israel's blindness and rejection, a new witness in the
earth, in and through the ministry of His disciples. They, and all who should believe on Him through their word, were to be His servants—His people—His witnesses in the earth. They were to continue His lowly ministry of grace, a ministry that was to be for the most part rejected. "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." And then, many even amongst those who professedly received the Gospel would be offended, and begin to betray and hate each other, until at last iniquity should abound. The full result of this abounding of iniquity or lawlessness (ἀνομία) is not yet seen. It will not be seen in its matured results, until, in the very midst and centre of Christendom, all the kingdoms of the Roman world shall suddenly throw off the name of Christendom, and give themselves over to the blasphemies of the lawless one. (ὁ ἀνομος.)

It was about this Dispensation then—a Dispensation that was to give birth to Christendom, that the disciples needed instruction. It was not the object of the Lord Jesus in this prophecy to teach much that was new, either respecting Jerusalem, or the Roman nations; for their history, especially as respects the Antichristian blasphemy that is to mark their end, had already been given in Daniel and the Prophets; and further instruction on the subject was afterwards to be given in the Revelation. In this chapter the Lord touches on the history of Jerusalem and the nations, so far only as it concerned His believing people. He teaches what their relation would be to the coming things. He tells them also what would be the
condition not only of that part of the earth which is to
go into Antichristianism, but also of that part which
will retain the profession of His name at the time when
Antichrist is revealed. (See chapter xxv.) The
greater part of this was new instruction. It knit the
new things, which He had come to introduce, into their
proper connexion with the old, respecting which the
Prophets had spoken. It confirmed and rendered more-
definite the words of the Prophets, whilst it added
fresh light. Indeed, it may be said to supply the link
between the Old Testament prophecies and the New,
and hence the importance of understanding the
prophecy aright. It is the consolidation of all
prophecies touching the "time of the end."

Verses 4, 5, 6. "And Jesus answering, said unto
them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many
shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and
shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and
rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled [excited,
or disturbed]: for all these things must come to pass,
but the end is NOT yet." Such is the manner in
which the Lord gradually corrected the thoughts of
His disciples. He did not startle them by instantly
saying in so many words that Jerusalem was almost
immediately to be desolated, centuries before the end
of the age; but He directed their attention to them-
selves, told them of the circumstances by which they
would find themselves surrounded after His departure,
especially of the approaching wars (the very wars that
were about to issue in the capture and subversion of
Jerusalem), and then warned them against supposing
that any of these things were signs of the end. "The end," said He, "is NOT yet."

These three verses, therefore, which speak of the wars and commotions which resulted in the capture of Jerusalem, are accomplished. They are not future, but past. They were NOT signs of the end. How carefully, therefore, should these verses be distinguished from the verses that follow, viz., the twenty-first and twenty-second, which speak of a coming tribulation in Jerusalem and Judæa, the like to which never hath been and never shall be, and which tribulation is to be the "immediate" sign of the end. "IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light," &c. How could this unequalled season of tribulation, which is to be the immediate precursor of the end, be the same with that referred to in the fifth and sixth verses, which is emphatically declared NOT to be the sign of the end? Already, more than eighteen hundred years have intervened betwixt the two periods. Yet in the ordinary interpretations of this chapter, the troubles which our Lord says were NOT the signs of the end, and troubles which He says shall be the immediate signs of the end, are supposed to be the same troubles. Unless these two periods are carefully contrasted, there can be nothing but confusion in the interpretation of this chapter, and such confusion there has been, and we are now suffering the consequence.

The word translated "troubled" ("see that ye be not troubled" μη θροεισθε) means not so much the
trouble of anxiety or fear, as that tumult and disorder of mind which arises from wrong and excited expectation. What more trying, what more unhealthful to the soul than false expectation—expectation that must again and again be disappointed. The Lord desired to free His disciples from this—to give them true instead of untrue expectations. Truth is the only instrument by which the Lord acts for blessing upon the heart. He never encourages us to expect what is untrue. Truth only sanctifies: falsehood blinds: and the blind fall into the ditch. The very object of this chapter is to teach us respecting the sign of His coming and of the end of the age, in order that we might not expect it at any moment (as some have said) or at a wrong period: and that we might not dissociate His coming from events with which He has indissolubly associated it. Let us take heed that we seek not to exalt ourselves against God so as to impugn the appointments of His wisdom.

Verse 7. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famine, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." Nothing could be more certain than that the disciples, if left to their own apprehensions, would, when the great sorrows which were then about to fall on Judæa came, have regarded them as signs of the end, and consequently, signs of the approach of that blessed millennial rest which is immediately to succeed that end. But the instructions given in this passage guarded them against that error. Expect not, said the Lord, the end to come as yet; for instead of the end
coming, nation shall continue to “rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” God also shall send in divers places throughout the earth, the pestilence, the famine, and the earthquake. How different this from millennial rest!

But observe the solemn words that follow: “All these are the beginning of sorrows.” The words, “all these” refer to the wars, pestilences, earthquakes, famines, &c., mentioned in the preceding verse. Such scourges of the hand of God have, from time to time, swept fearfully over the earth. But they are but the premonitory drops which fall before the thunder cloud breaks. All that has as yet been inflicted on Jerusalem, and on the Land of Israel, and on the earth at large, is but as nothing compared with that which is about to come upon the Land of Israel, when, after “the abomination of desolation” has been set up, God shall send that unequalled season of tribulation, the like to which has never been. The twenty-first verse of this chapter refers to the great sequel and consummation of sorrow. The visions of judgment in the Revelation pertain to the same period. The pouring out of the vials belongs to the closing part of the “time of tribulation, such as never was.”

Verse 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.”] “Then” (τότε), that is, at that time; for it is not a word like εἴτε, necessarily denoting sequence. At the time that these things, viz., the wars, &c., are occurring, or about to occur, they shall begin to persecute you, my disciples. The
words in Luke are even more express: "before all these," that is, before the wars, &c., "they shall lay their hands upon you and persecute you," &c.

I scarcely need say that this was fulfilled in the early persecutions of the Church, as recorded in the Acts, which preceded the troubles in Judæa, and continued contemporaneously with them, during which period, Stephen, Peter, Paul, and John suffered. If "you" in this passage does not refer to persons belonging to the Church of the living God (this some have said), then Stephen, Peter, and Paul and John could not have been members of that Church.

*And ye shall be hated by the Gentiles (παντῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν) for my name's sake.*) This began to be true as soon as the Church became sufficiently prominent to attract the notice of the Gentile world, and continued to be true until the Church lapsed and fell into unholy union with it. As soon as persecution from the Gentiles set in, many who had professed the name of Christ were offended, and began to hate and betray one another. On this followed, through successive ages, abounding iniquity, such as we see this day; and thus the love of the greater part (τῶν πολλῶν), even of real Christians, has been damped, and has "waxed cold." "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of the greater part shall wax cold"—words that can refer to none but Christians, because in no others does "love" exist. It is a fearful picture: yet how thoroughly it is verified by present facts. Most gracious are the words that follow: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." We
need the full comfort of this promise; yet let us not use it to encourage or to palliate our deficiency in zeal and energy.

Verse 14. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all the Gentiles; and then shall the end come." There are two periods in which the gospel of the kingdom is appointed to be ministered, and under very contrasted circumstances. The first of these periods commenced when the Lord as a sower went out to sow: it is continuing still, and will continue until the end of the present dispensation. It is preached throughout this lengthened period in rejection and sorrow. It is a testimony respecting a kingdom whose excellency and glory are not manifested. But as soon as the next dispensation commences, it will be preached under auspices altogether different. It will be still testimony to the same kingdom, but the glory of that kingdom shall then have been manifested so as for all flesh to see it together. The message will no longer then be preached in rejection, scorn and sorrow. The feet of the messenger will be welcomed wheresoever they tread. It will not then be preached "for a witness" merely—it will be received.

The words "this gospel," identify the gospel which the Lord preached with that which the Apostles subsequently preached. It declared that "great salvation" which (as the Apostle Paul says) "at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him." It is "the everlasting gospel": everlasting because the same in all
its essential characteristics in every age, and in every
dispensation. When preached in the Millennium it
will be essentially the same gospel; though the con-
comitants and results of its preaching then will be cir-
cumstantially very different. Whether preached "as
a witness" and rejected, or whether welcomed and re-
joiced in, its object is to gather to the same salvation,
to the same Church, and to the same glory. What-
ever, then, the changes in Jerusalem, or in the nations,
or in the professing Church itself, the same gospel of
grace shall continue to be preached in rejection and
reproach until it shall have been sufficiently preached
"for a witness," and then shall the end come.

"And then shall the end come."[a] They who regard
this chapter as already accomplished, have done their
utmost to show that "the end" here mentioned means
the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. But if that
were so, we could no longer quote any of the verses
between the seventh and fourteenth inclusive, as
describing anything that has happened since the
destruction of Jerusalem. In that case, wars, famines,
earthquakes, persecutions, declension in the Church,
and the progress of evil in the world, ought to have
ceased eighteen hundred years ago. The age would
have ended with the capture and destruction of Jeru-
salem by the Romans; and the Millennium would have
commenced. Nation would have ceased to rise against
nation; neither would they learn war any more. Is
it so?

Moreover, if the end had been reached at the
destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, then the wars and
commotions which occurred in Judæa soon after the departure of the Lord, would have been signs of that end. But we are expressly taught in the sixth verse of this chapter that they are *not* signs of the end. "These things must first come to pass, but the end is NOT yet."

With the fourteenth verse the first division of this chapter ends. The instruction in this part of our Lord's prophecy should be the more remembered, because it has been so continually gainsayed and rejected. Men have said—believers have said—that in this present Dispensation there shall be increasing spirituality in the Church; increasing peace, order, and advance of Truth in the world; and that thus the millennial rest shall be gradually attained, when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas." Such is said to be the result of agencies now operating in the world. But how entirely does this flattering picture, which men have loved to draw for themselves, differ from that here presented by the Lord. In speaking of the world He says, "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes." He speaks of the Church and says, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of the greater part shall wax cold." He speaks of the relation of the world to the Church and says, that the former shall persecute, and the latter find it a hard thing to endure. Has any prediction been ever more completely verified by facts than this? Yet when the heart is pre-occupied, it is deaf alike to the appeals both of Scripture and of fact.
THE SECOND DIVISION of this prophecy commences with the fifteenth verse, and extends to the close of the twenty-eighth verse. As this part of the chapter has been commonly regarded as fulfilled, it will be necessary first to show that the events predicted in it are NOT accomplished, but future.

The verse which first claims our attention is that which speaks of the unequalled season of tribulation. The words are very remarkable. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Is then the season of tribulation, thus solemnly predicted, past, or is it yet to come? This question is readily answered. One distinctive mark of THE unequalled season of tribulation is, that immediately after it the Lord will appear in glory: "IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. . . . . And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the Land mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," etc. The corresponding words in Mark are not less express: "But IN THOSE DAYS, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened," etc. Now if, as has been commonly said, the unequalled season of tribulation is past, if it occurred 1800 years ago, when Jerusalem was captured by the Romans, then we must say, that "IMMEDIATELY AFTER"
it, and "IN THOSE DAYS," the sun and moon were
darkened, and that the Lord returned in glory, and
that He sent His angels with a great sound of a
trumpet, and gathered together His elect from the
four winds, from one end of heaven to another. But
was it so? Infidels have seen the impossibility of our
truthfully saying this; and assuming that the pre-
dicted tribulation is past, have argued that the Lord
Jesus must have been a false prophet; for that He said
He would come in glory IMMEDIATELY after the
capture of Jerusalem, and He did not come. They
say (and they say rightly) that the word immediately
(ἐκδοτικός) is emphatic. Indeed, it is the emphatic word
of the chapter. The disciples had asked, What shall
be the sign of Thy coming? The Lord answers, that
the unequalled season of tribulation is THE sign: for
that IMMEDIATELY after it He will appear. And
so it shall be. His words shall be strictly, and in all
minuteness, fulfilled. There will be the unequalled
tribulation of which He spake, and immediately after
it He will come in His glory.

But although this argument is of itself conclusive,
another can be added not less decisive. The words
which our Lord uses in referring to the unequalled
season of tribulation are virtually a quotation from the
prophet Daniel. Daniel speaks of "a time of trouble
such as never was since there was a nation, even to that
same time." Now, inasmuch as there cannot be two
unequalled seasons of tribulation, it follows that the
passage in Daniel, and that in Matthew, must refer to
the same event; and therefore, if the passage in Daniel
be unfulfilled, the passage in Matthew must also be unfulfilled.

The futurity of the passage in Daniel may be regarded as an admitted truth. How, indeed, can its futurity be questioned? Only by our becoming infidels and rejecting the inspiration of the book of Daniel, and with it rejecting Christ, who quoted and affirmed the truth of Daniel's prophecy. To reject Daniel is to reject Christ. If we fall not into this deadly snare, if we admit the truthfulness of Daniel's prophecy, we must admit that no one has yet appeared on the stage of human things who has fulfilled the predictions contained in the concluding part of the eleventh chapter. He, of whom it is said, that "he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him"—he of whom these things are predicted has confessedly not yet been. Consequently, the unequalled season of tribulation cannot yet have been, for the next verse connects the unequalled tribulation with the fall of this great future personage.

"And AT THAT TIME shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble* such as

* Or more literally, "it shall be a time of trouble, such as never was;" that is, the time at which Michael shall stand up in behalf of Israel shall be a time of trouble such as never was. The passage in Daniel would not by itself determine whether Michael shall stand up for Israel at the commencement, or the close of this time of tribulation, but from other parts of Scripture we learn that it is at the very close.
never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Consequently, if the last verse of the eleventh chapter be not yet fulfilled, the next verse—viz., the first of the twelfth chapter must also be unfulfilled, for it is expressly connected with the preceding by the words, "AT THAT TIME."

But again; the verse which I have quoted not only connects the unequalled season of tribulation with the history of that future Monarch who shall glorify himself on Mount Zion; it also marks that season of tribulation as being the time when Daniel’s people—that is, Israel—shall be delivered. Now, inasmuch as Israel are not yet delivered, the time of tribulation in which they are to be delivered must be future.

Again, the unequalled season of tribulation is in Daniel connected with a certain resurrection that is to take place at its close. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." The same event, and in the same connection, is referred to by the Lord when He says, that "He will 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." Now, inasmuch as the saints have not thus been raised and glorified, it follows that the season of tribulation, at the close of which they are
thus to be raised and glorified, must be future. Therefore, until the last great Gentile oppressor of Israel has come, the time of unequalled tribulation cannot be. Its close is to be marked by the destruction of Antichrist, the deliverance of Israel and the resurrection of the saints. All these events are unquestionably future.

But there is yet another and third argument, quite independent of those already given, which is of itself sufficient to prove the futurity of this passage. In the fifteenth verse the Lord uses these words: “When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,” etc.

The Hebrew word יִרְשָׁד, translated by LXX. βδελυγμα, and by our English translators, “abomination,” is the Hebrew name (and was in that sense familiar to the disciples) for “idol.” The expression “holy place” also, was one with which they were familiar. They well knew that there was but one spot in the whole earth of which that name would be used, viz., the Temple of Jerusalem. Jerusalem might be the Holy City, but the Temple was the Holy Place in the Holy City. Even then, if there had been nothing else to guide them, the well-understood meaning of the words, “abomination,” “Holy Place,” etc., would sufficiently have taught the disciples to expect, not the overthrow of the Holy Place, but the establishment of an Idol therein.

But there was more than this. The disciples were not only familiar with the meaning of the word “abomination” or “idol,” as expressions; they were familiar also with a terrible and comparatively recent
fact in the history of their nation—a fact that was still living in the remembrance of Israel. About 160 years previous to the Advent of the Lord, the most terrible persecutor whom the Jews had ever yet known—Antiochus Epiphanes—appeared in Jerusalem. He dedicated the temple to Jupiter Olympus, and caused his image to be erected over the altar of burnt offering. This idol was set up in the Temple on the fifteenth day of the month Casleu (which answers to part of our November and December) and on the 25th day of the same month, which was the king’s birthday, they began to offer sacrifices to this Idol. This profanation of the Temple of God had been prophetically foretold in the Scripture thus: “arms shall stand on his part [Antiochus being spoken of] and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.” Dan. xi. 31. In the uninspired but authentic history of the first Book of Maccabees it is referred to thus: “And on the fifteenth day of Casleu, in the hundred and forty-fifth year they set up the abomination of desolation [βδελυγμα ερημωσεως] over the altar.” 1 Maccabees i. 15. The disciples were familiar with these passages in Daniel and in the Maccabees, as well as with the event described in them. When therefore the Lord Jesus again used the well-known expression, “abomination of desolation,” what could they expect but that at a time should come when an Idol should again be established and worshipped in the Temple of Israel? And so it will be.
There are three passages in Daniel which refer to this future scene of blasphemous idolatry in the Temple of Jerusalem. We know from various parts of Scripture that the Jews (perhaps soon) will regather themselves to Jerusalem in unbelief. We know that they will there restore their Temple: and these passages in Daniel tell us into whose hands that Temple will fall, and to what use it will finally be applied. The first passage in which "the transgression of desolation" is referred to is in the eighth chapter. It is there mentioned (as subsequently in the ninth chapter) in connection with the daily sacrifice being taken away, and the sanctuary being trodden down. And seeing that these events are expressly said to be at "the last end of the indignation" against Jerusalem, and at the time "when the transgressors are come to the full," it is evident that they are to occur at a time yet future.

The second reference to this event will be found in the last verse of the ninth chapter, which, literally rendered, is as follows: "And he [the Prince that shall come, i.e., Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with the many for one hebdomad [of years]: and at half the hebdomad he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease, and upon the pinnacle of abominations [a Hebraism for idolatrous pinnacle] shall be the Desolator, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the Desolator." Those who wish to consider more fully this passage, and the passage quoted from the eighth chapter, may see them treated of in "Prospects of the Ten Kingdoms of
the Roman World" (as advertised at end), and in "Remarks on the Prophetic Visions of the Book of Daniel," by S. P. Tregelles, LL.D. For our present purpose it is sufficient to observe, that the scene of idolatry here referred to must be future, because it is said to continue "until the consummation, and that determined, be poured upon the Desolator." We know that the consummation of Jewish woe has not yet been reached. We know that the judgment determined hath not yet been poured upon their adversaries. We know that the last great Desolator of Israel hath not yet appeared, much less been destroyed.

The last verse of the eleventh chapter of Daniel may also be quoted in confirmation of these remarks: for although it does not speak of the Temple, yet it distinctly refers to Mount Zion as being the scene of the glory of the last great destroyer of Israel. "He shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas in the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end and none shall help him." This verse avowedly refers to the consummation of Jewish woe, and therefore to the same period to which the eighth and ninth chapters had previously referred. It is the more important, because the verse which our Lord quotes respecting "the abomination of desolation" is found in the twelfth chapter which immediately succeeds, and which is in fact a continuation of the same vision that is commenced in the eleventh, and should not have been separated from it. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall
be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." Few (except those who reject the inspiration of the Book of Daniel) deny that this passage is future. How indeed can it be otherwise?—for when the 1,290 days here spoken of shall have ended, a season of rest and joy will be reached by forgiven Israel never to pass away. Thus two verses from the twelfth of Daniel, viz., the first verse and the eleventh verse are virtually quoted by the Lord, and seeing that the context of both these verses proves that they are yet unfulfilled, this alone would supply sufficient evidence to show that the corresponding verses in Matthew are unfulfilled.

In reading the twentieth verse of the twenty-first of Luke, viz., "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh," we must take great care not to confound it with the verse in Matthew xxiv., which speaks of the abomination of desolation being set in the Holy Place. Luke, in the verse quoted, speaks of a past event, viz., the gathering of the Roman armies against Jerusalem, which resulted in the capture of the City; and the subsequent verses go on to speak of the present period of Jerusalem's prolonged affliction: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." More than 1,800 years have already elapsed between the past event of which Luke speaks and the future event predicted in Matthew. Nor are the circumstances similar. Luke speaks of armies without Jerusalem,—armies which strove, but were long unable, to capture it. Matthew speaks of no armies, and no siege. The act of setting the abomina-
tion in the Temple will be the act of one who will not be besieging Jerusalem, but will be its master—one who will have made a covenant with Israel—one who for a season will have flattered them, and have been flattered by them. Nothing, therefore, can be more dissimilar than these two events. It would not indeed have been wonderful if the Romans, after they had possessed themselves of Jerusalem, had performed some act of sacrilege which might have foreshadowed the last great profanation by Antichrist. But we do not read of their having desired to profane the Temple. Nor was it in their power to do so, for the Temple was burned by a brand fortuitously thrown, and therefore, as a Temple, never came into their possession.

The only similarity that is found between this part of Luke xxi. and the verses we are considering in Matthew is this: as the disciples were commanded to flee as soon as they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies (and they did flee, and found Pella); so, when the idol of Antichrist is established in the Temple, all the disciples of Jesus who may then be in Jerusalem, are also commanded to flee: and all who are obedient to Jesus will flee, and like those of old shall find a refuge.

Verses 16 to 19. "Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of the house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days."] These verses are applicable only to those servants of
NOTES.

Christ who may at that time be dwelling in Jerusalem, or in Judæa, when this climax of blasphemous idolatry is reached. The claims of duty may have detained them there up to that moment. They may, perhaps, have been sent there by the Lord to preach the Gospel of His grace. But after the idol of Antichrist has been placed in the Temple, all the servants of Christ are not merely allowed, but are commanded to depart, and to depart instantly; because the unequalled season of tribulation in Israel (the like to which has never been) will instantly begin. Then Antichrist, as the scourge of God against Israel, will act in the full terror of that power which God will have commissioned him to put forth against them. "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." Moreover, direct judgments from the hand of God will fall both on Israel, and on their mighty persecutor. The setting up of "the abomination of desolation," therefore, will be a sign well understood by all "the understanding ones." It will clearly indicate to them that the season of unequalled tribulation has begun.

As being in the midst of Jews who will be as rigidly as ever observing their Sabbath, i.e., the seventh day, the servants of Christ are commanded to pray that their flight may not be on that day; for they would be as much hindered in their flight by the Jews observing it, as if they were keeping it themselves. This mention of the Sabbath shows how
entirely the old features of Jewish character will remain attached to that nation when they return in unbelief to Jerusalem. The servants of Christ are also commanded to pray that their flight may not be in the winter; for then the mountains in which they are to find their refuge would be a rude and inclement shelter. All these directions about things comparatively trivial, prove that the Lord has not forgotten to be gracious, and that He will continue to the end to count the hairs of the head of His people. They will also remember that ages before, a similar commandment had been given to certain of their brethren in similar circumstances—that they, their brethren, had acted on it, and had found the Lord faithful. A Pella had been provided; and this will be an encouragement to them.

Verses 21, 22. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." [The proof of the futurity of this unequalled season of tribulation has been already given. Some who have seen the impossibility of saying that it is altogether past, have wished to regard it as a prolonged continuous period, commencing eighteen hundred years ago, continuing still, and to continue until the great final end. But this notion is entirely set aside by the words, "except those days should be shortened." These words teach us that the unequalled season of tribulation is no ordinary season of punish-
ment to Israel, like that under which they at this moment are; but a season of such punishment as would utterly consume them if it were prolonged. They are not under any such oppressive weight of judgment now. Neither could it have been said that the days should be "shortened" if they had extended over eighteen hundred years. The unequalled season of tribulation will not exceed twelve hundred and sixty days. See Daniel xii. 11. When it was said that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved," it must be remembered that the sphere spoken of is Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. Not even the Ten Kingdoms of the Roman World, over which Antichrist will reign, are involved in the weight of this affliction; and as to other parts of the earth, they will be in comparative quiet. The fact of Jerusalem and the Land of Israel being under this tribulation, will, no doubt, necessarily affect those servants of Christ who are described as seeking refuge in the mountains of Judæa; and therefore such are not to be excluded from the words, "for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened:" but still, Israel are they on whom the weight of the tribulation is to fall; and inasmuch as there is to be at that time in Israel a remnant, who, though not acknowledged as belonging to Christ until after. He has come, are nevertheless elect in the purpose of God, they are doubtless chiefly contemplated in the present passage. The spared remnant in Israel are to pass not only under all the judgments on Israel, which precede and usher in the appearing of the Lord, but they are also to be brought
through all the terrors of that day of fiery indignation, which will alike consume the unbelieving in Israel and their proud persecutors. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and I will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

It must be remembered, however, that although the remnant of Israel are spoken of in this passage, they are not spoken to. The persons spoken to are the Apostles of Jesus; and they here stand as the representatives, not of unbelieving Israel, nor of any part of unbelieving Israel, but only of those (whether Jew or Gentile) who shall be gathered to Jesus in faith during the time of Israel's national unbelief. The remnant of Israel will pass through the tribulation that precedes the appearing of the Lord, as well as through the judgments that accompany His appearing, but will be preserved through both. The people of Christ, on the contrary, will be exempted from the bitterness which Israel is to know in both these periods. The great majority of Christians will not be in the Land of Israel, and therefore will not even be exposed to the tribulation that is there: and even those who will be there will find deliverance by flight. And as regards the judgments which follow on the manifestation of the Lord in glory, none of these judgments will affect them; for they will meet the Lord in the air, changed and glorified, before any of those judgments are poured out.
Yet, although none of the saints who obey the command of their Lord and flee will be involved in that peculiar tribulation that is to be sent on Israel, yet they will not thereby be exempt from all tribulation. The tribulation sent on Israel derives its distinctive character from being sent on them in righteous vengeance from the hand of the Lord their God. Even the persecutions of Antichrist will have this character to them. The rod in his hand will be God’s indignation against them. God in wrath will commission Antichrist to trample them down. But it will be far otherwise with the saints. They, too, that is to say, all who will be dwelling in the Ten Roman Kingdoms, will be exposed to the persecutions of Antichrist; but God will not have commissioned him to act against them as he will be commissioned to act against Israel. The saints may, for a season, be afflicted, but no wrath will be in their cup. On the contrary, they will be sustained, comforted, and not unfrequently delivered, like the five hundred prophets in the days of Jezebel: and even if they are called to lay down their lives, they will know that their blood thus shed will be as a drink-offering in the sight of the Lord their God. They will “overcome because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and will not love their lives unto the death.” See Rev. xii. To suffer for Christ’s sake is something very different from suffering under the indignation and wrath of God. But it is not only through Antichrist that Satan will at that time harass the saints of God. One of their dangers will be the being beguiled by
deceiving falsehoods. False rumours will be spread that the Lord has *secretly* come, and great signs and wonders will be wrought in attestation of this and like falsehood. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. 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."

It is wonderful how, after reading these words, any Christian can venture to affirm that the coming of the Lord will be *secret*. The whole of Scripture bears witness to the contrary. It declares that His coming shall be in the "clouds of heaven": that "He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God": that "He shall come in His own glory, and in the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels." There is no more intelligible thought to every suffering heart than "*relief*" (ἀνεσίω). When, then, is "relief"—relief from every form of suffering to be granted to the tribulated Church? Not before the Lord is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels," but "*WHEN*" He is so revealed, "taking vengeance." [See 2 Thess.].

In the passage before us the saints are solemnly cautioned not to believe either that the Lord has come, or that He will come secretly. "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." And why are we not to believe it? First, because His coming is not to be secret, but like the lightning shining from the east, even unto the west: secondly, because the moment He appears His saints shall be taken to Him, swift as the eagles are gathered to the carcase. He cannot come in any other way, or at any other time than that which His Word declares, for He is faithful and true. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

It need not appear strange to us that Christians should be in danger from deceiving rumours sustained by the miraculous agency of Satan. What are Christians when they forget to hold fast the testimony of God's Word? Have we not in our day seen many give themselves up to the control of pretended prophets in London, who sent them hither and thither at their will? Some were told to sell their possessions with a view to going to Jerusalem, there to meet the Lord. They were preparing to obey, when God in His mercy interfered, broke the spell, and gave them to see that they were the dupes of a lying spirit.

Verse 31. "And He shall send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven unto the other." This verse describes the gathering of His saints—not of Israel. Israel are to be gathered slowly. Part will be led by the Lord into the wilderness, and there pleaded with. "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face." Others will be gathered by the
Gentile nations, "upon chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts," and brought "as a present" to the Lord of Hosts. This is a very different thing from being gathered by angels. Moreover, the moment which the Lord is here speaking of is one of visitation in judgment upon Israel. They who are spared amongst them are not gathered until some considerable time after this.

Verses 32 and 33. "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." It is wonderful how any can read these words and say that it is wrong to look for signs of the Lord's return. So far from its being wrong, we are in this verse commanded to look for signs; and no one can "watch" in the way the Lord has commanded him to watch, unless he does look for the appointed signs. "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is nigh, even at the doors." These words were addressed, not to the Jews, but to the Apostles; and the Apostles were believers, and the representatives of believers only.

From these verses it is plain that all who watch and are observant of the appointed signs, will know "when it is near, even at the doors," although they will not know the exact day and hour. Even if the good man of the house were informed of the exact hour at which the thief would come, he would still have watched. He would not lay himself down to sleep and say, "I will sleep till the appointed hour draws nigh;" he
would be afraid to sleep—he would watch. But how much more would he feel it needful to watch, if he were merely told that the thief would come at an hour, of which he was not to be definitely informed, but of which he should know the approach if he watched for certain antecedent signs.

"So likewise YE, when YE shall see all these things," &c., words that imply corporate ideas, or that denote representative bodies, have always an indefinitely extended application as to time. Thus in the concluding verses of the twenty-third chapter, "YE" has an extended application through more than eighteen hundred years. It is addressed by the Lord to the representatives of the Jewish nation who then stood in His presence, to whom He said, "Ye shall not see me henceforth," &c. But there is a time when the representatives of Israel shall welcome Him and pronounce Him blessed. The same "ye," therefore, is extended to that future period: "ye shall not see me henceforth till YE shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh," &c. Israel rejecting Him, and Israel welcoming Him, are still Israel, and therefore are addressed by this word of identification, "ye."

The same prolongation of "ye," through a period that has already extended to more than eighteen hundred years, is seen several times in the twenty-fourth chapter in application, not to the Jewish nation, but to the Christian Church. The apostles as addressed in their representative character, are regarded as living on to the end of the dispensation. In the following verse, viz., "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of
wars," "YE" belongs to a period that passed ages since: but when we read in the thirty-second verse, "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, 'YE' know that summer is nigh," &c.: "ye" in this verse, as also in the fifteenth, forty-second, and forty-fourth verses, is extended to a period yet to come. For as the nation of Israel retains to the end a corporate identity, so also does the Church. Both remain until the end of the age. When regarded simply in their corporate character, the individuals of whom they may be, at any given time, composed, are not taken into account. On this principle St. Paul says, "WE that are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord," &c. He uses the word "we," although he knew that he himself was to die. He uses it in its corporate sense.

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ON THE WORDS, "THIS GENERATION."

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

They who contend that the season of "tribulation such as never was," occurred eighteen hundred years ago, when Jerusalem was captured by the Romans, found their chief argument on the word "generation" as used in this passage; insisting on its being interpreted as meaning the period that elapses between father and son. In reasoning with such, it may be well first to put it solemnly to their consciences, whether they are
indeed willing to affirm that the events predicted in the preceding verses did occur either before, or at the overthrow of Jerusalem. Are they prepared to say that the sun was at that time darkened: that the moon ceased to give her light: that the stars fell from heaven: that the powers of heaven were shaken: that the sign of the Son of Man was seen in heaven: that all the tribes of the earth mourned: that they beheld the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; that He sent forth His angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and gathered together His elect from the four winds? Every historic record, as well as every present fact, bear witness that these things did not occur when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans.

If we say that "the sun, moon, and stars," do not mean sun, moon, and stars: that "the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven," does not mean His coming in the clouds of heaven: that angels (who both here and in Matthew xiii., are mentioned as sent forth to gather together His saints) do not mean angels: and that the gathering together of His saints is not their gathering together; then, what assertion of neology is there, however daring, that may not be justified? The prophecy of the twenty-fourth of Matthew is plain, direct, simple, prophetic narrative. Our Lord uses no parable: there is no symbolic vision. There is not a shadow of a pretext for departing from the obvious meaning of the words employed. And they who do so, necessarily sanction a principle which may be used as and when men please.
to give currency to any wild or heretical theory that founds itself on a supposed secondary, or mystical, or recondite sense of the words of Scripture.

Nor is there even a show of plausibility in the interpretation supplied by these neological perversions. It has been said that the sun, moon, and stars, mean kings, rulers, dignitaries, &c.; and that their being darkened and falling from heaven means their passing away from the firmament of political power. What then would be the result of applying such a principle of interpretation to the present passage? It is very evident that the visitation of the Lord here mentioned, affects not Jerusalem only, but the whole earth. In the parallel passage in Luke it is said, “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth 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 on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” These words cannot be limited, any more than those in Matthew, to Israel, or to Jerusalem. In what sense then can it be said that the kings and potentates of the nations fell when Jerusalem was captured? It was not the hour of their fall, but of their triumph. The reigns of Vespasian and Titus, the conquerors of Jerusalem, inaugurated a new era of prosperity in the earth.

Again, as respects that most solemn prediction, “Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;” these are virtually the same words which the Lord
Jesus used when standing before the High Priest, and which the High Priest understood (and rightly) to be a reference to the thirteenth verse of the seventh of Daniel, and as involving a claim to the authority and glory there spoken of. If, therefore, it be true that the Lord Jesus came “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, then the corresponding passage in Daniel must also have been at that time fulfilled. This would involve the necessity of saying that the Roman Empire, about which Daniel prophesied under the emblem of a “beast dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly,” was destroyed eighteen hundred years ago at the capture of Jerusalem; and yet that was the very moment when it entered on a new career of prosperity and triumph. It would involve also the necessity of saying that “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was then given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” Is this so? Have truth and righteousness reigned supreme in the earth ever since that period?

And as regards “angels” meaning not angels, but men sent forth to preach the gospel, what peculiar mission of preachers of the gospel was there when Jerusalem was destroyed? The Pentecostal period had long passed. The Apostles were almost all dead; and the early energy of the Church had waned. And in what sense can we say that there was at that time a gathering together of the elect from the four winds? They were not then gathered to heaven. And as to
being gathered together in the earth, it was just the very moment when the Church lost its gathered form of visible unity, and began to be divided and to fall into association with the world. I repeat, therefore, that not only do such interpretations entail an acceptance of neologian principles, but they are inconsistent with the most palpable and universally acknowledged facts.

We may, therefore, unhesitatingly affirm that not one of the events referred to in the verses just quoted, occurred at or before the destruction of Jerusalem. The word translated "generation," therefore, cannot in this passage mean the period which elapses between father and son. There is another sense in which בֵּן in Hebrew, and γενεα in Greek (the words rendered by our translators "generation") are continually used, and that sense is the one which attaches to γενεα.

Nor were our translators wrong in adopting the word "generation," for we are accustomed in English to use that word in a sense very different from that in which we sometimes apply it to the period between father and son: as when we speak of "the generation of the righteous," or of "the generation of the wicked," meaning the whole class of persons so designated. So used, it has not a chronological limitation, but is used in a moral and corporate sense, just as we use the word "age," saying, "the iron age," "the golden age," &c. As to the use of γενεα (generation) in ordinary Greek, it may be sufficient to refer to one passage in Herodotus where he is contrasting the age of fable with the age of history, and calls the latter
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ἀνθρωπινὴ γένεα (Τῆς δὲ ἀνθρωπίνης λεγομένης γένεως Πολυκρατης εστὶ πρῶτος, Herod. iii. 122). The manner in which ἔλλ (LXX., γενεα) and γενεα are used in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures respectively, may be seen from the following passages. In Deut. xxxii. 5, ἔλλ (generation) is applied by Moses to the whole family of Israel during the whole period of their national perverseness; extending, therefore, over a period that has already measured more than three thousand years. The passage is as follows:—"They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" Here the words, "perverse and crooked generation," are evidently equivalent to "foolish people and unwise."

Again, see verses 19, 20, 21, of the same chapter: "And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." The last of these verses is quoted by the Apostle Paul in the Romans, and applied by him to Israel then. In the time of Moses, in the time of the Prophets, in the time of St. Paul, at the present time, and at that still future time of which Moses prophesies in this chapter, Israel have been, are, and will be "a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." The extended meaning of the word "generation" as here used, can be questioned by none.
See also Jeremiah vii. 29: "Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath." See likewise Proverbs xxx. 11, 14: "There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men." "Generation," says Cruden, "is taken for men of like quality and disposition, though neither of the same place nor age." In the following passages "generation" is used in application to the righteous. "God is in the generation of the righteous." Psalm xiv. 5. "This is the generation of them that seek Him." Psalm xxiv. 6. "If I say, I will speak thus; behold I should offend against the generation of thy children." Psalm lxxxiii. 15.

A similar use of γενεα (generation) may be seen in the New Testament; as, for example, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," (γενεα—generation) Phil. ii. 15. In 1 Peter ii. 9, our translators have adopted "generation" as the rendering, not of γενεα, but of γενος—"ye are a chosen generation," etc. This shows, however, the extended sense in which they were accustomed to use the word "generation." Again, when our Lord says
in Matthew xii. 45, "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation:" the words which immediately precede these, refer to an event not even yet accomplished in the history of Israel. At present they are more and more becoming like a house, "empty, swept, and garnished." They are not at present marked by that outrageous flagrancy of evil which caused even the Gentiles to marvel. On the contrary, many of them are marked by refinement, amiability, philanthropy, and the like. Yet they are still like a house, "empty"—however, "swept" and "garnished." The Spirit of Christ is not there. Therefore, the sevenfold power of Satan will occupy them at the last, and then we shall see the end of that rebellious people in the Antichristian blasphemy of the last days. No text, therefore, can more clearly show the extended sense of "generation." Other examples might be given, but these that have been adduced, suffice to show that γενεά (generation) is continually used to denote a class, or race, or family of persons, marked by certain moral characteristics, whether for good or evil. The passing away of that crooked and perverse generation, whose evil energies had for so many centuries prolonged the iron age of wickedness was anxiously expected by the disciples. They expected the passing away of the evil generation to be succeeded by the coming in of that new generation that should fill the earth with righteousness and peace; and they had hoped that the time was nigh. But the Lord corrected this thought. He told them that the present evil generation should not pass away and be succeeded
by the new until all the things of which He had spoken should first be fulfilled.

And is there anything more evidenced by facts than the continuance of the age of evil? What if Israel were at this moment to be restored to Jerusalem, and were there allowed to manifest what morally they are? Would not the pride of Pharasaic ritualism, and the loose latitudinarianism of the Sadducee, and the godlessness of the Herodian, who worshipped the secular power, and made secular progress everything; and the presence of rulers not less fox-like than Herod, nor less unrighteous than Pilate, mark that the generation of wickedness had not passed away—nay, that it is still dominant in the earth?

The Scripture recognises two generations only: first, the generation of wickedness, whose energies have formed the age of evil: secondly, that coming generation whose energies shall fill the millennial earth (the ἡ οἰκουμενή ἡ μελλοντα, of which the Apostle in the Hebrews speaks) with righteousness and peace. Accordingly, we find these two generations frequently contrasted in the Scripture. See, for example, Isaiah lxv. 15. "The Lord God shall SLAY THEE [the last representatives of the generation of wickedness are addressed] and call His servants by another name." See also Psalm cii. 18. "This shall be written for THE GENERATION TO COME, AND THE PEOPLE THAT SHALL BE CREATED shall praise the Lord." Here "the generation to come" is equivalent to "the people that shall be created." See also Psalm xxii. 30: "A seed
shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this.” If these passages be examined with their context, it will be seen that there is in all of them a reference to the passing away of the old, and the coming in of another generation, called “the generation to come:” “the people that shall be created:” “a people that shall be born:” called by Jehovah by “another name.”

The disciples found no difficulty in understanding these words of their Lord. They had asked respecting the end of the age. They recognised in this a reply to their question. The generation of wickedness, whose energies formed the age of evil, should not pass away till all the things of which He had spoken should be fulfilled.

The two following passages, the one from Theophylact, the other from Chrysostom, respect the use of the word ἐγένεα. They both reject the limited sense of “generation.” The extract from Chrysostom is the more valuable, because he contends so decidedly for the moral sense of ἐγένεα. If these writers had only substituted ἡ ἐγένεα τῶν ἀπιστῶν for ἡ ἐγένεα τῶν πιστῶν—that is, if they had understood ἐγένεα to refer, not to “the generation of the righteous,” but to “the generation of the wicked,” these statements would have been unexceptionable.

The words of Theophylact are, commenting on this passage in Matthew, ἐγένεαν ενταῦθα λέγει, οὐ τὴν τοτε οὐσαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῶν πιστῶν ὀσάνει τούτῳ λέγων· οὐ μὴ...
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παρελθη ἢ γενεα των πιστων, εῶς οὐ ταῦτα παντα γενηται. "By 'generation,' in this place, he means not that which then was, but the generation of the faithful, saying in effect that the generation of the faithful should not pass away till all these things shall have come to pass."

The words of Chrysostom are: πως οὖν, εἰπεν, ἢ γενεα αὕτη — Οὐ περι της τοτε λεγων, ἀλλα περι της των πιστων οίδε γαρ γενεαν ουκ απο χρονων χαρακτηρίζειν μονον, ἀλλα και απο τριτου θρησκειας και πολιτειας, ως ὅταν λεγη, Αὕτη ἢ γενεα ξητουντων τον Κυριον—"In what sense then, it may be said, does he use the word 'generation'? Not as meaning that then existent, but referring to that of the faithful; for he knew how to infer the character of a generation, not from the time of its duration, but from its religious and political characteristics, as when he says, 'This is the generation of them that seek the Lord.'" Hom. on Matt. xxiv.

"The one shall be taken and the other left," etc.] From the fifteenth to the forty-fourth verse inclusive, the prophecy mainly contemplates that part of the earth which will be given over to Antichristianism, viz., the land of Israel and the Ten Kingdoms of the Roman World. Their blasphemous apostasy will be the cause of the abomination of desolation being set in Jerusalem. Thoughout this Antichristian sphere, when the saints are "taken" to the Lord, the others will be "left" to meet that peculiar judgment which is to fall on the Apostates here, before they enter on
that other scene of everlasting judgment beneath. In this the Apostates differ from "the tares" of the thirteenth chapter—"tares" being the emblem, not of those who avowedly reject the name of Christ, but of those who nominally own it. They will be found throughout the wide extent of Christendom; and when the saints are taken to the Lord, they too will be removed, and "cast into the furnace of fire." They will not, like the Apostates, be consumed by "the breath of the Lord's mouth" here, before they know the torment of the unseen world, and are therefore not "left" in order that they might undergo it. The great wine-press of the wrath of God in which the Apostates are trodden, is said to be trodden "without the city," "in the valley of Jehoshaphat." Compare Joel iii. 12, &c., and Rev. xiv. 19. Their open and manifested defiance of the Lord is met by open and manifested destruction from His hand.

The word "taken" (παραλαμβανεῖ) is the same as is used in John xiv. 3, being there translated "receive." "I will come again and receive you unto myself." It is a word perfectly different from that translated "took away" in Matt. xxiv. 39: "the flood came and took them all away." Ηλθεν ὁ κατακλυσμός καὶ ἦρεν ἀπαντας.

A reference to the last verse of Luke xvii. will show the connection of the words "one shall be taken," with the taking of the saints to the Lord.

"Who, then, is that faithful and wise servant?" &c.]. At this point, as I have said, the prophecy widens, and we have moral characteristics only, without local or geographical connections.
The servants over the household: the virgins going forth to meet the bridegroom: the servants trading with the talents: the parable of the sheep and the goats: supply four aspects (for aspects is a more suitable term than divisions) of Christendom at that hour.

After describing the ungodly revelry which is to mark the world, and more especially the Apostate kingdoms, the Lord says, "Watch ye, therefore;" and then speaks of the servant over the household. Next, in the parable of the virgins, He speaks of the general condition of the professing Church as about to be one of slumber, and again says, "Watch ye, therefore;" and then adds the parable of the talents.

The parable of the sheep and goats (for the thirty-third verse proves this also to be a parable) concludes the prophecy by a description as comprehensive as professing Christianity itself. Every one who professes the name of Christ is either "a sheep," or "a goat," whatever his office, or position, or employment; whether he be regarded as a servant over the household, or as one of the virgins, or as a servant trading with his talent.

That aspect of the kingdom of heaven which the parable of the virgins supplies, began with the earliest days of Christianity, when first the professing Church assumed its distinct position in the world as waiting for the return of their Lord. The slumber soon commenced, and has continued throughout the age; and whatever occasional revivals there may have been, or may be, the general characteristic of professing Christians will be slumber until the end.
It is the cry, "Behold, He cometh," that awakens the foolish and the wise alike. This cry is evidently the result of the sign of His visible approach having been seen and recognised by all. It cannot have gone out as yet, for not only is all the professing Church thoroughly awakened when it does go forth, but conversion ceases after the cry is once uttered. The foolish virgins strive to obtain oil, and cannot.

Chapter xxv. 1. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven," &c. ["The kingdom of heaven is continually used in the Gospel of Matthew to designate that body which professes the name of Christ. They profess to be subject to the heavenly laws, and to be guided by the heavenly Spirit of that heavenly One who is now glorified in the heavens.

The place assumed by the Church when it first took its stand among men, was one of separate purity. They professed to be separate from, and to testify against, the corruptions that abounded around them. Hence the emblem of "virgins;" for Scripture is wont to characterize persons according to their profession. They professed also to wait for the return of their absent Lord. Hence they were as those who went out to meet the Bridegroom. But there were some who did this in the power of natural impulse—not of grace.

In this parable the whole of our dispensation is regarded as if it were one day. Early in the day "the virgins" went forth; and early they began to slumber. Scarcely had the Apostles died when the Church began to forget the very truths which they were called forth
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to maintain. Thus all that the Scripture reveals respecting the return of the Lord to bind Satan, to raise and glorify His saints, to convert Israel, and to introduce the glories of His millennial reign, has been commonly rejected as untrue: and even where these things have been recognised, how feeble has been the resulting influence! These and many other like things prove the reality of the slumber. The slumber is so general that it is spoken of as if universal; for it is the habit of Scripture to convey general truths in universal language. Thus, in John iii. 32, it is said, "No one receiveth his testimony;" but in the next verse it is added, "He that hath received his testimony," &c.; showing that there are some exceptions. So likewise here: although it is said, "All slumbered," yet it is added, "Watch ye, therefore," showing that some may rise above the general condition.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh," &c.). The word "behold" is emphatic. It is not here the language of faith speaking anticipatively of things not as yet seen, but it is the exclamation of those whose eyes gaze upon that of which they speak. That these words belong only to the time when the sign of the Lord's coming in glory has been actually seen and recognised is, as I have above observed, proved by two things; first, that the whole of the professing Church is awakened; secondly, that all conversion in this dispensation ceases. I say in this dispensation, because after the judgments that accompany the glorious epiphany of the Lord have passed away, the everlasting gospel will again be
preached in the millennial earth, and millions be
gathered into the garners of God.

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their
lamps." [Although the time will be brief between
the appearance of those signs in the heavens which
shall intimate the approach of the Lord and His actual
coming, yet it will be sufficient to afford opportunity
for full reflection. The first attempt of all the virgins
is to order their lamps. The wise succeed; for they
had lamps, wicks, oil-vessels, and oil in their vessels.
The foolish had the three first, but not the last. They
make an attempt to kindle their lamps, but the flame
of a wick without oil expires the moment it is kindled.
Therefore they say, "our lamps are going out"
(\sigma\beta\epsilon\nu\nu\nu\tau\alpha\i). A flame kindled on a dry wick may
flicker on a dry wick, but it will soon expire.

Up to that time there had been the messengers of
Christ, saying, "Come, buy ye, without money, and
without price:" but they had been neglected, or de-
spised by the foolish virgins. Now, indeed, they are
sought after, but it is too late. The message of grace
will have been withdrawn. They will have to say,
"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are
not saved."

We must take heed not to fall into the error of
some who have affirmed that the foolish virgins re-
represent real believers who are not finally lost, but
only temporarily excluded from Christ’s presence.
In the first place, what can be more plain than the
words, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not"?

Secondly, can any one have faith—true justifying
faith, and not be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? Nor is it possible that there should be a believer who has no "oil." All who are Christ's, have the grace of the spirit of Christ.

Besides, the parable of the virgins is one out of a class of parables in Matthew, all of which are to be interpreted on the same principle. What "the tares," and the "bad fishes" caught in the net, and he "who had not on a wedding garment," and "the wicked servant" who refused to trade with his talent, and "the goats," indicate in the parables to which they respectively belong, that "the foolish virgins" indicate in the parable to which they belong. If the "foolish virgins" were saved, none in Christendom would be lost.

Verse 15. "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two," &c.]. In the parable of the talents in Luke, we find the same sum, viz., one talent given to each of the faithful servants. The energy with which they traded was different—one gained ten talents—the other five, and consequently, their reward was different; one having rule over ten, the other over five cities.

In Matthew, on the contrary, the sums given were different. One had five talents given to him, because his "ability" for using them was regarded as great; the other received only two, his ability for using them being regarded as less. The respective ability of each, however, being equally displayed, and the same energy in using their respective opportunities being shown, the results were proportionately alike—five
talents gaining five, and two talents gaining two: consequently, there was the like meed of praise. It was said to both, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

This, doubtless, is intended as an encouragement to those who may have few talents—limited opportunities, or limited powers. He who faithfully uses his few endowments, will have the same commendation as he who faithfully uses his greater powers.

But we must be careful to remember, that as it is only on the ground of free, sovereign grace that we are saved, so it is only on the ground of the same sovereign grace that rewards of service are given. What have we in the way of gifts, or power, or opportunities, that we have not received as the free, undeserved gift of God? And after we have done all that we may do, we are but unprofitable servants: we have done no more than our duty. To do less is sin. And observe how clearly this sovereign authority of grace, giving as, and how it pleases, is taught in the appointment respecting the one talent, when taken away from the wicked servant. It is given to him who had the ten talents. Not that he deserved it more than he who had two. But grace giveth as it pleaseth. God has a right to do what He will with His own.

The parable of the talents as given in Matthew and Luke, are to be regarded not as discrepant, but different parables; spoken evidently at different times by the Lord, as the context shows. The use of the same imagery was evidently intentional, and serves to
give greater prominence to the points intended to be contrasted.

It should be observed that the parable of the talents, as given in Luke, proves that there is no dispensation to intervene between the present and the millennial. The period to which the parable of the talents belongs, ends only when the Lord has returned, "having received the kingdom."

Verse 32. "Before Him shall be gathered all the Gentiles."

It is better to adhere to the proper and usual rendering of πάντα τὰ ἐθνῆ (all the Gentiles) in this passage. This expression, however, does not mean every individual Gentile on the earth, but is limited in the next verse to those who belong to the flock of the Great Shepherd, whether nominally or in truth—whether goats or sheep. The expression, "all the Gentiles," as limited by the two next verses, shows that it means all the Gentiles who professedly own Him as the Shepherd. Therefore, all the heathen, all Mahomedans, and all who, under Antichrist, will cast off the profession of the name of Christ, are not included in this parable. The like may be said of all the prophetic parables of Matthew. They are appropriated to the condition of the Gentiles who nominally own Christ while Israel is rejecting Him. Instead, therefore, of all the tribes of Israel being gathered before Him when He returns in His glory, His flock will not be Israel, but Gentiles: all of that flock shall be gathered before Him.

It is not unusual to find universal expressions limited by the context. Thus St. Paul says, speaking
of his being summoned before Cæsar, "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and all the Gentiles might hear." St. Paul evidently means all the Gentiles who at that time surrounded him. He does not mean every individual Gentile, nor every Gentile nation.

In the parable we are considering, the Gentiles are gathered, not as nations, but as individuals. Each sheep, and each goat, represents not a nation, but an individual.

It should be observed also, that this parable belongs to a period at which angels, not saints, are spoken of as surrounding the Lord. He descends from heaven into the air, accompanied by angels only. His saints join Him whilst He is yet in the air.

It should also be remembered that "the sheep" can only be those who have been converted previously to the appearing of the Lord, and have been under His care as the Shepherd in the present dispensation of suffering. To them also the name "My Brethren" belongs: for that blessed name could not be applied (as some have strangely said) to unbelieving Jews, nor to any who have not the Spirit of Christ. "Who is my Mother? and who are my Brethren? And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples, and said, behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

It is evident from the whole parable that none are
regarded as present in the scene, except the Lord, the angels, the sheep, and the goats. The description is parabolic, just as in the parable of the marriage-supper, or in that of the labourers for a penny a day. When a vast multitude is gathered before a Sovereign, the whole multitude are not wont to speak. They speak by a few deputed as their representatives. So is it here. A few are supposed to speak in the name of all. The King answers the few; and pointing towards the mass who are standing around or behind the speakers, He says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren," &c. It is not uncommon to have one part of the Church spoken of in distinction from the rest. Thus we find it said to the Hebrews, "In that ye have ministered;" and yet the Hebrews were themselves saints.
APPENDIX A.

It has been shown in the foregoing pages that this prophecy (with the exception of that part of it from the fourth to the fourteenth verse inclusive, which has been throughout the dispensation, and still is in a state of progressive accomplishment) is as yet unfulfilled. The reasons for this assertion will be chiefly found in the notes.

But however great the hindrance to the right understanding of this chapter, occasioned by the notion of its having been already accomplished; an obstacle as great, and more fatally bearing upon the interpretation of Scripture as a whole, has arisen in the doctrine, that this prophecy is not addressed to the Christian Church at all.

This doctrine, perhaps, cannot strictly be called new: for it formed apparently a part of Marcion’s doctrine in the second century: but Marcion was a heretic.* The dangerous consequence of such a doctrine, can scarcely be overstated, for it is obvious that if the Apostles, in receiving a prophetic description of

* See observations on the doctrines of Marcion in “Thoughts on Isaiah,” as advertised at end.
their own condition after the Lord had departed and the Holy Spirit had come, are not to be regarded as being themselves of the Church, and hearing for the Church, they cannot be regarded as hearing for the Church in any other part of any of the Gospels: for what difference can be pointed out between their circumstances, when hearing the last discourses in John, and those in which they heard the twenty-fourth of Matthew on the Mount of Olives? If they heard not for the Church in Matthew, they heard not for the Church in John.

When hearing this prophecy on the Mount of Olives, they may be regarded either as they then were; or as they were about to be, as soon as the prophecy which they were hearing began to be fulfilled in their own individual circumstances. In either case, they represent the Church, and the Church only.

For first, as to their then condition; they were separated from Jerusalem and everything therein. They stood contrasted even with the remnant that is to be spared in Israel (for that is mentioned as left in the twenty-third chapter) the moment they followed Jesus without the gate. They were the same persons as two days after this discourse, sat down at the last supper with the Lord, received the cup of the New Testament in His blood, and were addressed and prayed for by Him in the manner recorded in the concluding chapters of John. Is not this the place of the Church, and of them alone?

And if we look at them as prophetically described in this chapter, who are they of whom it is said that
they should "hear of wars and rumours of wars" (v. 6), that they were not to be troubled (v. 6), that they would be afflicted (v. 9), killed (v. 9), and hated of all nations? (v. 9). Who were the persons that were to experience such things? They were James, and John, and Peter, and Stephen, and Paul—in other words, the Pentecostal Church and its successors—persons who had received and acted in the full power of the Pentecostal Spirit. And who are they whose love, because of the abounding of iniquity, waxeth cold? Ourselves—the weak and unworthy successors of those who were first persecuted for Christ's name sake. We also are they of whom it is said, that "whoso endureth to the end shall be saved." Are John, Peter, Paul, and ourselves, all to be excluded from the Church? We must be, if this system be received.

And when we turn to that part of the chapter which is as yet entirely unfulfilled, who are they that will flee when the abomination of desolation is really set in Jerusalem? Christians—and Christians only. They go out of Jerusalem at the very moment when the Jewish remnant begin to have a distinct and palpable existence in Jerusalem. The remnant in Israel, instead of quitting Jerusalem, or escaping the tribulation as the saints will, are left in the very heat of the furnace, and will be refined thereby. "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall
say, The Lord is my God.” During the whole period of the tribulation, therefore, the Church will be in another locality, and in outward circumstances altogether different from those in which the Jewish remnant are; not to speak of the still wider distinction that exists between them in spirit. That part of the Church which happens to be locally in Judæa will flee, according to the direction of the Lord; and that part of it which happens to be elsewhere will be as the wise virgins, etc.: each of these positions being entirely different in place and circumstances from those of the Jewish remnant. And when the Lord Jesus does appear, they who are addressed in the twenty-fourth of Matthew will, as having adhered to Jesus in rejection (which the Jewish remnant have not), and as having suffered with Jesus throughout the dispensation (which the Jewish remnant have not), and as having obeyed at the end of the dispensation the direction of Jesus to flee (which the Jewish remnant do not), go into heavenly mansions above—their obedience to the commands of Christ preserving them from the tribulation which falls on Jerusalem previous to the appearing of the Lord; and their being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, preserving them from the fires of the day of His judgment. Whereas, the Jewish remnant, after passing through both these periods of terror, will not then pass into the heavenly mansions with the Church of the first-born, but will (for a season) tarry on the earth, and be there instructed in the knowledge of Jesus, and form the centre of the earth’s millennial government. Can any
two bodies be more diverse than these? Can any two histories be more contrasted in the Word of God?

To say that the Twelve Apostles in the prospective instructions received by them did not receive them for the Church, but for some other body which is not the Church, is to take from us the very instructions which the Lord Jesus, by His own lips, imparted to us for our specific guidance during the period of His absence. In the very last words addressed by the Lord to the Apostles on earth, He expressly commanded them to teach the observance of all things that He had commanded them to all the Gentiles who should be brought by their ministry into the fold of faith. Shall we say that this was a mistake? That we are not to be taught "to observe all things that He commanded them"? That any one who fears God, should venture to enunciate a statement such as this, is as astounding a fact as any that has ever occurred in the sad and gloomy history of professing Christianity. If the instructions received by the Twelve Apostles are not intended for us, we can have no title to take our place within the walls of that City on whose foundations were written the names of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb. Accordingly, that heavenly City has by some been pronounced to be Jewish, and unsuited for the higher calling and dignity of the Church of God!! Better that prophetic Truth should be buried as it was fifty years ago than that it should be revived in association with such doctrines as these.
APPENDIX B.

THE WRECK AND THE ROCK.

What was the condition of the Disciples of the Lord Jesus during His personal ministry on the earth, and what their relation to the Jewish system, out of which they were gathered?

If we imagine a stranded vessel, about to be dashed in pieces by a storm gathering in the distance, we should have a fit emblem of the Jewish system when John the Baptist commenced his ministry. We may name this vessel, "Hagar." The Jewish nation were in it. They were under law and under curse, and John was sent to warn them of the coming wrath. He took his stand, not in, but by the side of the vessel. He stood on the sand, and behind him was a rock. He stood between the vessel and the rock; and when any heard his cry, and joined him on the sand, he pointed onward to the rock; and they who reached it gained safety there, and found themselves by the side of the Lord Jesus. You may write "Sarah" over their heads. They were children of promise. They were instantly fixed, like Abraham, upon the ground of grace. Promise and grace, not law and condemnation, became instantly their portion. In the
estimate of God (no matter what their own apprehensions were) they stood in the full acceptance of the name of Jesus.

How different, then, the portion of those who still lingered in the fated vessel, and those who were safely planted upon the rock. It is true they were not as yet guided onward to the neighbouring shore, and settled there in ordered dwelling-places. At Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given, this was done. They were gathered into due order, so as to act in the earth as the Church of God, and were given to understand things, which, till then, they could not bear. But long ere this, they were on the rock, and Jesus was with them, and they were separated from those who were in the wreck, and were no longer on the sand. All the promises of God, little as they understood them, were "yea and amen" to them in Christ.*

The object, therefore, of John, and the object of the Lord Jesus, was to gather out of the "Hagar" vessel,

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* To belong to the Church of God in glory is the lot of all the redeemed. Every believer, from Abel down to the last millennial saint who shall be gathered into the fold of faith, belongs to the Church in its eternal sense. In the new heavens and earth all the redeemed will form one glorified body for ever. But before Pentecost, the members of the family of faith were not endowed with such concurrent powers of thought and action as gave them ability to act together in the earth as the Body of Christ. Such powers were not bestowed until redemption had been completed and declared. To be dispensationally in the Church as a gathered body in the earth, and to be inheritors of its final glory, are two very different things. To be excluded from the Church in glory is to be lost.
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to the new kingdom of grace: John, indeed, not gathering into it nor ministering its blessings, but preparing for it and directing towards it. Dispensationally, John was not in the kingdom of heaven on earth, as the feeblest disciple of Jesus was. "The least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he." But he will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven when manifested in its glory. Heaven is not made a transcript of the dispensational differences of earth—those differences (important though they be through the lessons taught by them) are all swallowed up in the unity of the glory given to the redeemed in Christ.

It is a great and serious error to suppose that either John or the Lord Jesus ever tried to mend that "Hagar" vessel. Their mission supposed that it was worthless, and that it never should be launched upon the deep again. If their mission had been with the intent of trying its capacities for being refitted and launched again, that would have made them ministers of law. But Jesus was not the Minister of law. He was a "Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."* And of John it is written, "The law and the Prophets were until John; from that time the kingdom of

* "Circumcision" seems in the minds of many to designate something necessarily connected with law. But it is quite the contrary when regarded in connexion with Abraham. Hence our Lord's words, "not that it was of Moses, but of the fathers." It was to Abraham the "sign and seal" of what God had granted him in grace, and involves in its typical import that
heaven is preached." To suppose that they made trial of the then existent Jewish system—the Sinai system—to see whether it could be restored, is to confound their ministry with the ministry of the Prophets. The Prophets said, Repent, and remember the old paths. They directed backward to the past. But John did not: he directed onward to new things: he said, Repent, and believe on one who is to come after me. Jesus said, Repent, and believe on ME.

The trial, therefore, that was made of Israel by John and by the Lord Jesus, was indeed a trial of the nation, but it was not a trial whether they should be set up again in the wreck, but whether they would nationally be gathered out of the wreck upon the new ground of safety. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." If they had been so gathered, they would have been set up as God’s nation in Jerusalem, but it would have been on new principles, and new ground. It would not have been the revival of the principles of the days of Solomon: that would have been the revival of law. It would have been a bringing in of the new, the Abrahamic principles of grace—the same principles on

separation from the flesh, the means of which were provided by God in the death and resurrection of Jesus. That which is Sinaitically Jewish, is carefully to be distinguished from that which is Abrahamically Jewish. The Sinaitic form is temporary: the Abrahamic eternal. The one led to judgment: the other to glory.
which the Church of the present dispensation is founded; the same on which Israel will, by-and-bye, be gathered. It would have been the bringing in of the principles of the new covenant, to be sealed by the blood of the testator; for it was not merely the rejection of Jesus by Israel, but the evil of the unregenerate heart of man, that made it necessary that Christ should die.

Yet, although the disciples of Jesus were no longer treated as under the law, but under grace, the moment they were gathered around His person; yet, He, their Master, was under law, and had to fulfil all. Accordingly, in the same discourse in which He abrogates to them the authority of Moses (saying, Moses said unto you thus: but I say unto you thus) in the same discourse He tells them that not one jot, nor one tittle should in any wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. They could not keep the law. He kept it for them, and was made a curse for them: and thus placed them on the rock of salvation—"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonah."

The thunderbolt of Divine vengeance is about to descend soon upon that vessel, long doomed prophetically to destruction. When it does descend, a few of those who have lingered there will be saved by a miracle of grace. Some will be found gathered upon the sand:* some will be saved in the midst of the devouring floods. See Zech. xiii. 9. Together they will form the spared remnant of Israel—the remnant that is to be made a strong nation: but none of them

* Those who bow to the testimony of the two witnesses.
at that hour—the hour of their nation's visitation, will be found gathered, like the disciples of Jesus, on the rock.

Consequently, whilst they remain either in the wreck, or on the sand, there is nothing in common between their position and that of those who are gathered upon the rock. No circumstances can be more distinct; and yet upon an imagined resemblance between these two positions has been grounded a system which has taken the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, either in whole or in part, from their proper bearing on the saints of the present dispensation, and deranged the whole order of Scripture interpretation.

The Apostles of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels, are always regarded, and always addressed as persons standing in acknowledged acceptance before God, through the name of Jesus, and therefore, never are, and never can be regarded as the representatives of any who are not standing in such acknowledged acceptance. Those who are standing on the rock never represent those who are standing on the sand, or in the wreck. The Apostles never represent the remnant of Israel until that remnant becomes a converted and saved people, safe, standing on the rock, in the millennial earth. On the Mount of transfiguration we find Peter, James, and John, representing the saved Christian people of the Millennial earth; but never, in any one place, are they found to represent any except those who stand in acknowledged acceptance in the name of Jesus.
APPENDIX B.

Whether, therefore, directed for the hour then present, as when it was said to them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any village of the Samaritans enter ye not;" or whether prophetically instructed for their future service after the Holy Spirit had come upon them, and therefore instructed as our representatives during this dispensation of suffering; or whether regarded as typically holding, as on the Mount of transfiguration, a place by-and-by to be occupied by the millennial people—in all these three relations (and there are no other) we find them representing only those whom God is regarding and treating as accepted in the name of Jesus. How needful, therefore, to beware of any system that confounds the condition of those who are safely placed upon the everlasting Rock, and who have acted up to the full light at that time communicated, with the condition of any who are not so found upon the Rock, and who have not used the light which had been dispensationally given. How needful to beware of such a system, especially when such a depreciation, or rather cancelling, of the Gospels follows its adoption.

It is quite true that the Apostles while the Lord was yet in the flesh (as I have already said) were not brought into a Church standing. Until Pentecost they were not "builed together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." From the moment they quitted the Jewish wreck, whether under the testimony of John or of Jesus, they were in a transitional state. The vessel, the sand, the rock, the land, were all different points. The sand and the rock were, as regards
their progress into this Church standing, transitional. But the moment they reached the sand they were no longer amidst the old things, and as soon as they reached the rock, they were of the new. They became inalienably possessed of all that was in Christ Jesus, and all that connected with Him as the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the Son of the Father. The title to all this was secured and acknowledged by God; though the development and actual impartation remained to be fulfilled. And as regards the instruction which they personally received from the lips of Jesus, at least two-thirds of it was prospective, and intended for them after they received the Pentecostal Spirit, and all was addressed to them as persons belonging to a new, though transitional order of things, and, therefore, instruction incapable of being applied to any who are not dispensationally before God similarly connected with the new things.

It is important to remember also that all the temporary instructions (all that were not prospective) addressed to the disciples in the Gospels, were addressed to them as believers in Jesus indeed, but not as believers in Jesus crucified and risen. The Dispensation had not as yet advanced to that point, even before God. He could then regard and treat as accepted those who merely knew Jesus according to the flesh. But this can never be so again, for Christ has died, and is now glorified for ever. Henceforth God will never treat as believers any who are unacquainted with Christ crucified and
risen. Hence the temporary instructions given to the disciples while Christ was in the flesh, can never pertain to any again, seeing that Christ can never again be known, save in resurrection; but there were other instructions avowedly prospective. Some of these instructions refer to truths and to circumstances that are everlasting, and reach on into the eternal ages: others refer to circumstances that are characteristically connected with the present Pentecostal Dispensation, which is a Dispensation of suffering: but as in the Epistles, so also all the prospective instructions in the Gospels, belong solely to those who are standing in avowed acceptance before God.

The Jewish remnant whilst gathered by the Elijah testimony on the sand, will not stand in acknowledged acceptance before God in the name of Jesus. No part, therefore, of the Gospel precepts can belong to them there. When brought onward to the rock, Jesus will have come, and the sufferings of the children of God for righteousness-sake ended: consequently, no parts of Scripture which imply such suffering will belong to them. The new age will have commenced in the earth.
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