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# FUTURE EVENTS REVEALED

ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 24 and 25



By  
David L. Cooper, Th.M., Ph.D.

UC-NRLF



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June 2, 1936. David L. Cooper.



# FUTURE EVENTS REVEALED

(ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 24 AND 25)

BY

DAVID L. COOPER, T.H.M., PH.D.

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*The Eternal God Revealing Himself; The New Sanhedrin;  
The God of Israel; Messiah: His Nature and Person;  
Messiah: His Redemptive Career; Why Evangelize  
Israel? The Literary Method of Giving the  
Gospel to Israel; Is the Jew Still First  
on God's Prophetic Program? etc.*

לְכַרְתָּא וְנִנְכְּחָה יֵאמֵר יְהוָה Isa. 1:18

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HISTORICAL

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AUTHOR

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To  
DAVID L. COOPER, JR.,  
the author's beloved eldest son, for whose  
success in life as a true servant of the  
Lord and for an abounding re-  
ward for faithful service ren-  
dered to his absent Lord  
he prays, is this vol-  
ume dedicated

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## Introduction

**I**N SOME quarters there is an aversion to the study of the prophetic Word. This deplorable attitude toward this phase of truth is not wholly unjustifiable. Both in the past and at present many earnest men of God have in an unscientific manner superficially studied the predictions of the Word relating to the future, have hastily drawn conclusions, and have proclaimed their unsound deductions as the very Word of God. Unfortunately many have made out "the order of events" and set a schedule for the Lord to follow. It is needless to say that the Almighty does not run the affairs of His Universe according to man-made timetables. From time to time some earnest, enthusiastic, prophetic students have even set the very date for the rapture of the Church, the Great Tribulation, and the glorious coming of the Lord. Naturally these men have had a following among the most devout people of the land. I need not emphasize the fact that in the past these prognostications have been discredited by history. At all times when dates have been set and programs announced and the Lord has not fulfilled these unscriptural expectations, the credulous masses have, in bitter disappointment, been thrown back into a stupor of despondency and scepticism which, in many instances, have proved disastrous to large numbers and which have done untold harm to the cause of our Lord. The reaction to the disappointment and the disallusionment which always follow has caused many thinking people to conclude that unfulfilled prophecy cannot be understood. To them it is a matter of guessing and speculation.

At the present time it seems that many are attempting to give forth the warning concerning the evident and impending crisis toward which we are rushing with the passing of each day. Unfortunately, in certain circles at least, it appears that the more spectacular one can present the teaching concerning coming events, the better it is received. Hence some who have a mere acquaintance with the prophecies rush forward to satisfy this morbid curiosity and to prey upon the credulity of the uninformed. The wilder and more fantastic the message can be made, the heartier seems to be the reception accorded the presentation of such vital themes as those dealt with in the prophetic Word. The present

day delights in a thrill of every kind. The unfortunate thing about the whole matter is that when people are stirred by fantastic, speculative teachings, they become accustomed to such thrills that the sober, plain, and logical exposition of the prophecies cannot satisfy their abnormally developed curiosity and desire to delve into the mysteries of the future concerning which God has made no revelation. To meet this unnatural craving new and strange doctrines of a still more spectacular character are constantly brought forth. Hence there is some justification for the criticism that often students of prophecy cease to be students and turn prophets themselves.

Being unacquainted with the established facts and also being unable to differentiate between wild speculations and imaginations of novices on the one hand and the sane and sober teachings of those who have made a thorough and scientific investigation of the prophecies on the other hand, many earnest people hastily reach the conclusion that no one can understand the unfulfilled prophecies and that all who attempt to teach them are merely guessing and speculating. By them all are put in the same category—usually on the black list. Acknowledging with regret that there have been in the past much fantastic, unscriptural speculations relative to prophetic matters and that at the present time there is a volume of wild, fanciful, and unreasonable teaching pouring forth daily, which is only confusing the minds of the untaught, I earnestly ask the reader of these pages not to classify all students of prophecy as fanatics and to refrain from dubbing them with some opprobrious name. According to church history all of the outstanding men in the church of the first three centuries of the present era were students of prophecy. I admit that there was some speculation among these giant defenders of the faith in the nascent church but they were the exception and not the rule.

In all fields of inquiry men seem to have to grope their way at first. History shows that in all of the sciences those who have blazed the way toward better things have at times yielded to the subtle influence of theory and speculation. But as time passes they begin to plant their feet upon the solid rock of facts and recognized truth. The same thing is true with reference to the study of unfulfilled prophecy. Those of us who are laboring in this field have a sincere desire to profit by the mistakes of the past and to give forth that which is supported by the plain declarations of the Word of God.

The statements in the last paragraph being true, I again request that the reader dismiss from his mind the errors of the past and the fanciful teachings of the present and approach these pages with one object in view—namely, to know what the Lord has said on the subject which is herein presented. Being desirous of the truth, he will ask the Lord to open his eyes, as David did, in order that he might behold wonderful things in His Word.

In this connection I wish to state that I have endeavored to follow the well-established and widely recognized principles of interpretation of language. I have approached the Scriptures with the absolute conviction that they are the inspired Word of God. To me the Lord said what He meant and meant what He has said. Hence every word has its own inspired significance for me.

The first principle of understanding any language is what I call "The Golden Rule of Interpretation." It may be stated in the following words: "Take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the context indicate otherwise." This rule is recognized by all logicians, grammarians, and rhetoricians as the true criterion by which one must be governed. When one is guided by this principle, he cannot go far afield. On the other hand, if he ignores it, he is free to roam at liberty and can never know whether he has interpreted the Word of God correctly.

There are other principles of interpretation which are of vital importance to a correct, scriptural exegesis and which throughout the book I emphasize. They will be noted in the discussion by the careful reader.

Believing in the power of God and His Word, I send forth this exposition of this portion of it with the prayer that He may use it for His own glory and for the blessing of those who might read it.

*David L. Cooper.*

Los Angeles, California,  
June 3, 1935.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION AND HARMONY OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

#### I. AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION IN PARALLEL COLUMNS

##### A. *Historical Setting of the Discourse*

MARK 13: 1, 2

1 And when he went out of the temple, one of the disciples said to him, Teacher, behold, how great are the stones and how great are the buildings. 2 Jesus replied to him, Do you not see all of these great buildings? A stone shall not be left upon another which has not been utterly thrown down.

MATTHEW 24: 1, 2

1 And having departed from the temple, Jesus was going on his way when his disciples came to show him the buildings of the temple. 2 He answering, said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I am telling you, one stone shall indeed not be left here, stone upon stone, which shall not be thrown down.

LUKE 21: 5, 6

5 While they were speaking concerning the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts consecrated, he said, 6 In regard to the things which you see, the days will come in which one stone will not be left upon another which has not been thrown down.

##### B. *The Questions Propounded to the Lord by the Four Disciples*

MARK 13: 3, 4

3 And while he was sitting upon the mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, saying, 4 Tell us, when these things will be, and what is the sign when they are about to be fulfilled?

MATTHEW 24: 3

3 While he was sitting upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be, and what is the sign of your presence and the consummation\* of the age?

LUKE 21: 7

7 And they asked him, saying, Teacher, when therefore will these things be? and what is the sign when these are about to come to pass?

##### C. *The Christian Dispensation*

MARK 13: 5-7

5 Jesus began to say to them, Take heed lest anyone lead you astray.

MATTHEW 24: 4-6

4 And replying, Jesus said to them, Beware lest anyone lead you astray.

LUKE 21: 8, 9

8 But he said, Take heed lest you be led astray; for many will

\* The word translated *consummation* literally means *to end together or at the same time*. The term, rendered *end* in verses 6 and 14, in the verbal form means *to bring to a close, to finish, to end*. The former is this latter one in composition with a preposition. The pictorial conception of this word may be illustrated by roads converging at one point. The choice of this word evidently was determined by the data found in Zechariah 14 which undoubtedly was in the apostles' minds when they asked these questions.

## MARK 13: 5-7

6 Many will come in my name, saying, I am he, and will lead many astray. 7 But whenever you hear of wars and reports of wars, be not alarmed; it is necessary that they come to pass, but the end is not yet.

## MATTHEW 24: 4-6

5 For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah, and will lead many astray. 6 But you will hear of wars and reports of wars; see to it that you are not troubled, for it is necessary that these things come to pass, but the end is not yet.

## LUKE 21: 8, 9

come in my name, saying, I am *he*, and the time has drawn near; do not follow them. 9 But when you hear of wars and disturbances, be not terrified; for it is necessary that these things come to pass; but the end is not immediately.

D. *The Sign of the End of the Age*

## MARK 3: 8

8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines; these are the beginning of birth-pains.

## MATTHEW 24: 7, 8

7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places; 8 but all these things are the beginning of birth-pains.

## LUKE 21: 10, 11

10 Then he said to them, Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and from heaven there will be great signs.

E. *Prediction Concerning the Personal Experiences of the Apostles*

## MARK 13: 9-13

9 But take heed to yourselves; men will deliver you up to the Sanhedrin and to the synagogues; they will beat you, and before governors and kings they will bring you because of me,—for a testimony unto them. 10 And it is necessary that the gospel shall be preached to all of the nations. 11 When they lead you away, delivering you up, do not meditate beforehand what you will say, but in that hour what you are to speak will be given you; for you are not the one speaking but the Holy Spirit. 12 And a brother will deliver a brother to death, and father, child; and the children will rise

## LUKE 21: 12-19

12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands upon you, and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and rulers because of my name. 13 It will result to you for a testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate how you will make your defence; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, by which all those opposing you will not be able to withstand nor to reply to you. 16 But you will be delivered up by parents, brothers, relatives, friends; some of you they will put to death. 17 And you will be

## MARK 13: 9-13

up against parents and put them to death; 13 and you will be hated by all because of my name; but the one enduring to the end, this one shall be saved.

## LUKE 21: 12-19

hated by all because of my name. 18 And a hair of your head shall by no means perish. 19 In your patience you will possess your souls.

F. *The Sign of the Fall of Jerusalem, 70 A. D.*

## LUKE 21: 20-24

20 But when you see Jerusalem encompassed by armies, then you may know that her desolation has drawn near. 21 Then those in Judæa, let them flee to the mountains, and those in the midst of her let them go forth, those in the field let them not enter into her. 22 Because those are days of vengeance for the fulfilling of all things written. 23 Woe to those who are with child and to those who are nursing (children) in those days; for there will be a great calamity upon the land, and wrath to this people. 24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led into captivity among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

G. *The Great Tribulation*

## MARK 13: 14-23

## MATTHEW 24: 9-28

9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. 10 And then many will be caused to stumble, and will deliver

## MARK 13: 14-23

14 When you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not (let the reader consider), and those in Judæa let them flee into the mountains, 15 the one on the housetop let him not come down, nor enter to take anything out of his house, 16 and the one in the field let him not return back to take his garment.

17 But woe unto those who are with child and to those nursing (children) in those days. 18 But pray in order that it not come to pass in the winter. 19 For those days are days of tribulation, such as have not been from the beginning of creation which God created until now, and shall never be.

20 And except the Lord shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the elect, whom he hath chosen, he has

## MATTHEW 24: 9-28

up one another, and will hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise, and will lead many astray; 12 and because of the great increase of lawlessness, the love of the many will grow cold. 13 But he who remains to the end, this one will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the entire inhabited world for a testimony unto all the nations, and then the end will come.

15 Therefore whenever you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (the one reading let him consider), 16 then let those who are in Judæa flee to the mountains, 17 the one upon the housetop let him not come down to take the things out of his house, 18 and the one in the field let him not return back to take his own outer-garment (tunic). 19 But woe to the women with child and to those who are nursing *their babies* in those days. 20 But pray in order that your flight may not be during the winter or on the sabbath; 21 for there will be then great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever will be. 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no flesh would be saved; but because of the elect, those days shall be short-

## MARK 13: 14-23

shortened the days. 21 And whenever one shall say to you, Behold, here is the Messiah, Behold, there, do not believe it; but false Messiahs and false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders in order to deceive, if possible, the elect. 23 But beware; I have told you all these things beforehand.

## MATTHEW 24: 9-28

ened. 23 Then if anyone says to you, Behold, here is the Messiah, or, There; do not believe it.

24 For false Messiahs will arise, and false prophets; they will show signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 Behold, I have told you beforehand. 26 If, therefore, they say to you, Behold, he is in the desert, do not go out there; Behold, he is in secret chambers, do not believe it. 27 For just as the lightning goes forth out of the eastern skies and flashes to the west, thus will be the coming of the Son of man. 28 Wherever the carcass is, there will be gathered together the vultures.

### H. *The Revelation of the Lord Jesus at the Close of the Tribulation*

## MARK 13: 24-27

24 In those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, 25 and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers which are in the heavens will be shaken.

26 And then they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds with much power and glory.

## MATTHEW 24: 29-31

29 But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the heavens, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken;

30 and then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the heavens, and then will all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and much

## LUKE 21: 25-28

25 There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, in bewilderment because of the roaring of the seas and the billows and its tossing; 26 men fainting for fear and expectation of those things coming upon the inhabited earth; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then will they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and much glory.

MARK 13: 24-27

MATTHEW 24: 29-31

LUKE 21: 25-28

glory. 31 And he will send forth his angels with a great trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

28 When these things are beginning to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.

### I. *The Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation*

MARK 13: 28-37

MATTHEW 24: 32-25: 13

LUKE 21: 29-36

28 But from the fig tree learn the parable: when her branch is already tender, and is putting forth her leaves, you know that the summer is here;

32 But from the fig tree learn the parable: whenever its branch has already become tender, and the leaves put forth, you know that the summer is near;

29 And he spoke a parable to them: Look at the fig tree: and all of the trees; 30 when they are already putting forth, observing it you know of yourselves that already summer is near.

29 thus also you, when you see these things coming to pass, know that he is here, *even* at the doors.

33 thus also you, whenever you see all these things, know that he is near, *even* at the doors.

31 Thus you also, when you see these things coming to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near.

30 Truly, I am telling you that this generation will by no means pass away, until all these things be fulfilled. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 32 But concerning that day or hour no one knows: neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, only the Father.

34 Truly I am telling you that this generation will in no wise pass away until all these things come to pass.

32 Truly I am telling you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things transpire. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word shall by no means pass away.

35 The heaven and the earth will pass away, but my word will in no wise pass away. 36 Concerning that day and hour no man knows: neither the angels of the heavens, nor the Son,—no one but the Father.

34 Take heed to yourselves lest perchance your hearts may be burdened down with self-indulgence and drunkenness and cares and responsibilities of life and

MARK 13: 28-37

MATTHEW 24: 32-25: 13

LUKE 21: 29-36

that day come upon you unexpectedly as a snare. 35 For it will come upon all those living upon the face of all the earth. 36 But be watchful at every season praying in order that you may be able to escape all these things which are coming to pass and to stand in the presence of the Son of man.

37 For just as were the days of Noah, thus will be the coming of the Son of man. 38 For as in those days which were before the cataclysm (flood) men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the very day Noah entered into the ark, 39 and they did not know until the cataclysm came and took all of them away, thus will also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then two will be in the field; one is taken, and one is left; 41 two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left.

33 Take heed, be watchful; for you do not know when the time is. 34 It is as a man, living abroad, who leaving his home, and delivering to his servants authority, to each one his work, and to the porter, gave command that he should watch. 35 Be on the watch therefore; for you do not know when the lord of that house comes, whether at evening, or midnight, or cockcrowing, or morning; 36 lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

42 Watch therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

MARK 13: 28-37

MATTHEW 24: 32-25: 13

LUKE 21: 29-36

37 What I say to you, to all I am speaking; be watchful.

MATTHEW 24: 43-25: 13

43 This know, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have permitted his house to be robbed. 44 Wherefore you also be prepared, because in the hour when you are not thinking the Son of man comes.

45 Who then is the faithful servant and the wise one whom his lord places over his household, to give to them their portion in the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord coming shall find him thus doing. 47 Truly I am telling you that over all his possessions he will place him. 48 But if that evil servant say in his heart, My lord is delaying, 49 and he will begin to beat his fellow servants and also eat and drink with drunkards, 50 the lord of that servant will come in the day when he does not expect, and in an hour when he does not know, 51 and he will severely scourge him and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

MATTHEW 25

1 Then the kingdom of the heavens will be like ten virgins, who taking their own lamps, went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 For the foolish, taking their lamps, did not carry with them oil; 4 but the wise ones took oil in vessels with their lamps. 5 And when the bridegroom tarried, all nodded and slept. 6 In the middle of the night there was a shout, Behold, the bridegroom; go out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 But the foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil, because our lamps are going out. 9 But the wise replied, saying, Perhaps there will by no means be a sufficient amount for you and for us; go rather to those who sell, and purchase for yourselves. 10 But while they were gone to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were prepared entered with him in to the marriage feast, and the door was closed. 11 But later there came also the remaining virgins, saying, O Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he replying, said, Indeed I am telling you, I have never known you. 13 Therefore be watchful, because you neither know the day nor the hour.

### J. *The Rewarding of the Saints after the Rapture*

14 For *it is as when* a man, going on a journey, called his own servants, and delivered to them his property. 15 And to one he gave five talents, but to another two, and still to another, one—to each according to his own ability; and he made his journey. 16 The one receiving the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five others. 17 Likewise the one having the two talents gained two others. 18 But he who received the one, going away, dug into the earth and hid his lord's money. 19 But after much time the lord of those servants returned and had a settlement with them. 20 The one receiving the five talents coming brought five other talents, saying, lord, the five talents you delivered to me; but behold, five talents I have gained. 21 His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant, over a few things you have been faithful; over many things I will appoint you; enter into the joy of your lord. 22 And the one having received the two talents came and said, lord, the two talents you gave to me; but behold, two talents I have gained. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, over a few things you have been faithful; over many things I will appoint you; enter into the joy of your lord. 24 And he also who had received the one talent came and said, lord, I knew that you are a

stern man, reaping where you have not sowed and gathering where you have not scattered; 25 and being fearful I went away and hid your talent in the earth; behold you have your own. 26 His lord replying said to him, evil and wicked servant, you know that I reap where I have not sowed and I gather where I have not scattered. 27 Therefore it was necessary that you take my money to the bankers that at my coming I might have mine own with interest. 28 Therefore take from him the talent and to the one who has the ten talents give it. 29 For to the one having, it shall be given, and he will have a superabundance; but when one does not have (an increase), even what he possesses shall be taken from him. 30 But the evil servant cast into the darkness without; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### K. *The Judgment of the Nations and the Establishment of the Kingdom at the Revelation of the Lord Jesus*

31 But when the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon the throne of his glory; 32 and before him all the nations shall be gathered, and he will separate them one from the other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will place the sheep on his right hand but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave food to me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger was I and you entertained me, naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to me. 37 Then the righteous will reply to him, saying, Lord when did we see you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you water to drink? 38 But when did we see you a stranger and gave you entertainment, or naked and clothed you? 39 But when did we see you sick or in prison and we went to you? 40 And the King replying will say to them, Truly I tell you, whatever you do to one of these my brethren, even the least, you do to me.

41 Then he will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from me you accursed ones into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was also hungry and you did not give me food to eat, I was thirsty and you did not give me a drink of water. 43 I was a stranger and you did not entertain me, naked, and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not look after me. 44 Then will these reply, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and we did not minister unto you? Then will he reply to them, saying, Truly I am telling you, according to that which you do not to one of these, the least, you have not done it to me. 46 And these will go off into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting.

## II. EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE TEXT

Under section I I have presented my own translation of the three accounts of the Olivet discourse. My doing this calls for an explanation.

### A. *Reasons for Private Translation*

Why another translation, one may ask, inasmuch as we have excellent English versions of the original text? In my judgment the American Standard Version presents the most accurate rendering obtainable. Weymouth in his *New Testament in Modern Speech*

has given us a most excellent, modern translation which is true to the text, although occasionally his readings border on a paraphrase. This characteristic, however, does not mar, to any great extent, the value of his work. Other individual versions have been made which are most excellent and the merits of which are here most freely acknowledged.

Although the reader has access to the text of both the Common and the Revised Versions, I thought that a literal and accurate translation in modern day English which follows the original text most loyally would be advantageous for this exposition. Our present-day English is so very far removed from the English of the time when the Common Version was made that it becomes difficult sometimes for us who are especially acquainted with modern English and less familiar with that of three hundred and twenty-four years ago to get the full force of the original idiom. Hence I felt that if I could give an accurate translation in the idioms of today, the reader probably could grasp the idea more clearly and rapidly.

In a few instances I have made a paragraph division which was not indicated in the Revised Version. For example, the translators' failure to make a paragraph at Matthew 24:9 has hindered the proper understanding of the drift of the thought. Hence I have placed one there.

In a few cases I have chosen a secondary or derived meaning for certain words of the original text. This I have done only when the context demanded such a procedure. As we shall see in this investigation, the only rule by which one may be guided in the study of any language is to take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless there is absolute and positive proof in the immediate context and also in the general teaching of Scripture, which demands a secondary or a derived meaning. That such a course was demanded by the facts of each context where I have chosen a secondary connotation is evident from the footnotes in the Revised Version. Only when the context demands a secondary meaning are we ever justified in accepting one.

### B. *Reasons for the Identity of the Three Records*

Is the same discourse recorded in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21? This question is sometimes asked by conservative, believing students. As a rule, scholars answer this query in the affirmative. Some few voices, however, have questioned the cor-

rectness of this position inasmuch as Luke's record does not move in the same groove throughout the discourse along with Matthew and Mark. In other words, Luke's account has much that is not given by the other two writers and at the same time he omits much given by them. In this connection I might add that Matthew alone gives us the material found in chapter 25 of his record.

The fundamental thought suggesting this dissent from the usual opinion is based upon a failure to understand that our Lord frequently repeated His utterances and discourses. From a close study of the gospel narratives there is abundant evidence for this position. In view of this fact it becomes necessary for us to examine the context of each passage and to learn the occasion of the discourse recorded in each, the place, and the time.

The place of the discourse recorded by Matthew and Mark was on the Mount of Olives after Jesus had gone forth from the temple on the last day of His public ministry. Mark (12: 41-44) tells us of our Lord's observing the worshipers in the temple as they cast their gifts into the treasury. He connects this incident with the Olivet discourse. Though Matthew omits the mention of this occurrence, he places Jesus in the temple immediately before His going to the Mount of Olives to deliver this famous prediction. All the circumstances identify the two narratives as records of the same sermon. Luke (21: 1-4) calls attention to both our Lord's comment concerning the donors at the temple and His prediction relative to its destruction. This fact shows that He was talking of the same incident mentioned by Mark. Since we have been able to recognize Matthew's and Mark's accounts as records of the same sermon, Luke's, therefore, is another record of this one discourse.

As they moved along the road, the disciples called the Lord's attention to the large stones used in the construction of the temple and the consecrated gifts placed there by the worshipers. Luke simply tells us that they drew His attention to the buildings of the temple but does not inform us that Jesus went forth out of the Sacred Precinct and sat upon the Mount of Olives; his statement, however, is in perfect accord with those given by the two other evangelists. He omits that detail and simply calls attention to the query propounded to our Lord by the four disciples. All the facts harmonize and can be woven into one story.

The time as presented in each of these three records is the same. Mark and Luke place the delivery of this discourse after our Lord sat over against the treasury, noting different individuals who made

offerings to the Lord. After that incident, according to Mark, Jesus went out from the temple and sat upon the Mount of Olives where He delivered this wonderful discourse. Matthew omits this observation and simply calls attention to His leaving the temple and going to the Mount of Olives. These facts identify the time as the same for the delivery of this sermon recorded in the three chapters. Furthermore, after the record of these three chapters each of the evangelists speaks of the last supper which followed the delivery of the sermon within two days. This evidence confirms the identity of the time of the records.

The reason for our Lord's speaking on this occasion was the question put to Him by the disciples when He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem which we shall see occurred in the year 70 A. D. To the careful reader who has examined the translations above, it is immediately apparent that the subject matter of these three records is the same. As one would anticipate, there are some details which are mentioned by one but omitted by the other writers. The similarities are so very striking and pronounced that immediately one identifies the three records as an account of the one discourse. In the light of the facts presented in this section the identity of the three records is absolute.

### C. *Reasons for the Parallel Columns*

Since the three accounts agree in the main and at the same time two of them contain information not included by the other writer, it is convenient for the reader to have the three records side by side, as is done in all harmonies of the gospel. By having in parallel columns those verses opposite each other that deal with the same matter, one, at a glance, can see all the facts as presented by the historians. This arrangement, therefore, will prove helpful to the reader who wishes the facts before his eyes at the same time for consideration.

### D. *Division Sometimes Not Clearly Defined*

In the western world during these modern times, the lecturer, the speaker, and the writer outline their material logically and follow a definite plan. The orientals of our Lord's day did not place such great stress upon logical division. Since Christ gave His revelation in the terms and the style current in His day, it is to be assumed, therefore, that there are not the clear-cut and the well-defined division of the material which we would expect in a modern

college, seminary, or university lecturer. Logic in the lecture room is one thing; life and reality are another. Our Lord was dealing with the latter two; hence we see a blending of His teachings, one with the other.

#### E. *The Occasion of the Prediction*

As our Lord left the Holy City, retiring to Bethany where He spent the nights during the last week, the disciples called His attention to the large stones that had been used in the construction of the temple and also to the magnificent tokens placed there by consecrated worshippers. In this incident is reflected national pride, notwithstanding their three and a half years of association with the Lord. Under His matchless teaching the apostles had not grown in the spiritual life sufficiently to comprehend the transitory nature of material things. In order to correct this imperfection, our Lord foretold the complete demolition of the temple, stating that one stone would not be left upon another that had not been thrown down. This prediction was sufficiently clear to show the disciples the transitory nature of earthly things.

This prophecy is very specific—one stone shall not remain upon another that has not been thrown down. The Lord, unlike men, never used a superfluous word. Each expression is freighted with meaning. This prediction was literally fulfilled by the Romans who, in their quest for the gold upon the temple structure which was melted at the time when it burned, literally dug up the foundation stones. Jesus, knowing all things, foretold what they would do. This fact warrants my making the observation that every word which the Lord has spoken will be fulfilled. Abraham, believing God, rested his faith on three little words in the Hebrew, translated into English: "So shall thy seed be." No word from God is without power. The predictions which have already been fulfilled came to pass according to the literal meaning of the oracles. The accuracy and the literalness with which prophecy has been fulfilled lead us to believe that those predictions which have not as yet come to pass will be made good by the Lord with the same unerring exactness.

#### F. *Statement of the Two Questions and Their Relations*

The questions as given by Matthew are: "Tell us, when will these things be, and what is the sign of your presence and the consummation of the age?" Mark states the first query in the words

employed by Matthew. He gives, however, the second a little differently: "and what is the sign when they are about to be fulfilled?" Luke words the first question with practically no variation from Matthew and Mark. He frames the second as follows: "and what is the sign when these are about to come to pass?"

On account of the different statements of the second question some critics have attempted to find discrepancies in the narratives. Is this a necessary inference? How could the three writers, being inspired infallibly by the Spirit of God, word especially the second query so very differently in each case? Do not the evangelists give these interrogations as direct quotations? These questions are asked frequently. What are the answers? May I suggest the following explanation? Probably the apostles in their excitement over the prediction made by Jesus framed their questions as stated by the three evangelists. One led out by wording his query as Matthew states. Then another, being interested in one special phase of the subject, immediately worded his question as given by Mark. For instance, this evangelist gives the second interrogation as an inquiry concerning when "these things are all about to be accomplished?" The thought of the *accomplishing* of the task was standing foremost in the inquirer's mind. Luke stated that one asked "when these are about to come to pass?" The idea of accomplishment of the prediction was not foremost in this questioner's mind. He was simply thinking in terms of events *coming to pass*; hence he stated his question thus.

One need not be surprised to read the various statements of the questions. Situations similar to this one occur daily. A speaker frequently is asked a specific question by one of his audience; another, having the same question in mind but being more interested in some special phase of the subject, asks the same question, laying the emphasis upon some other phase of the subject. His individual slant upon the subject matter causes him to modify his statement; hence, the variation. A third could likewise ask the same question, laying the emphasis upon still another element. In an open forum just such a situation develops at all times. Upon this common experience, therefore, we may take our stand and recognize perfect harmony between all the statements of the evangelists.

#### G. *The Answer to the First Question*

When the apostles showed such great interest in the prediction, naturally and lovingly the Saviour gave the desired information.

His granting this request emboldens us to come to Him and ask for additional light on various passages which are obscure to us. If we only come in faith asking for understanding and wisdom, He will not refuse. On the other hand, if we doubt, we need not expect an answer.

Knowing our Lord as we do, we may be certain that He gave an answer to both questions. In speaking of only two questions I am anticipating the discussion set forth in chapter 2. In that chapter we likewise shall learn that neither Matthew nor Mark gave our Lord's answer to the first question. With grateful hearts we praise God that Luke was led by the Holy Spirit to record His reply to their first query.

#### 1. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE APOSTLES

We shall see, as we proceed in this investigation, that our Lord had such passages as Zechariah 14 in His mind when He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. The awful horrors revealed in this chapter of Zechariah necessarily will involve great suffering on the part of the people of God who will be upon the earth during the day of Jehovah. Since the apostles were thinking of these future events, and since Jesus knew that His disciples then living would suffer many things and be discredited, He foretold the personal experiences through which they would be called to pass, especially the apostles. According to His forecast they would be brought before synagogues, rulers, governors, and kings. They were not, however, to meditate beforehand what their defense should be but were to look to the Holy Spirit for guidance and ability to answer their opponents. On every occasion, when they should be brought before tribunals, they were to consider the occasion as an opportunity for giving forth a clear-ringing testimony to the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although they would have to suffer for His name, in all their persecutions not one hair of their head should be lost. In their patience they would really win the life that is life indeed. These facts are stated in Luke 21:12-19.

If the reader will scrutinize Luke 21, he will see that verses 10 and 11 foretell what I call in chapter 2 "the sign of the end of the age"—namely, a world war attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places. But verses 10 and 11 took the minds of the apostles forward from their own day to the end of the age. Verse 12, however, begins with these significant words: "But before all these things, they will lay their hands upon

you. . . ." The disjunctive conjunction *but* and the preposition *before* brought the apostles' thoughts from the end of the age back to their own day in order that Jesus might tell of the personal experiences set forth in verses 12-19 through which they would be called to pass.

## 2. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, 70 A. D.

"Tell us, when will these things be . . . ?" This question pertains to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. The answer is to be found in Luke 21 : 20-24 inclusive. As we have seen in the preceding section, verse 12 brought the apostles' minds from the end of the age back to their own day and to experiences which would surely come to them individually.

At least during the lifetime of some of the apostles, the temple would be destroyed. The disciples asked when the prophecy would be fulfilled. Jesus gave them the sign by which they could know when the time was near for the destruction of the city—namely, a siege and total blockade of the city by armies. The invasion of the country by a foe was not indicative of the fulfilment; but, if that army should besiege and encompass the city, that fact would be the sign that the time was near for the fulfilment of the prediction.

According to Luke 21 : 21 our Lord instructed the disciples who would be at the time in Judæa to flee to the mountains and those who would be within the city to depart out of it. This latter exhortation seems to be contrary to reason. How could anyone escape from the city when it was surrounded by a hostile army? Fortunately for us, Eusebius (Book 3, chapter 5) gives us that information. After the Roman forces had besieged Jerusalem for some time, Titus, the commanding officer, for reasons not recorded withdrew his forces. The Christians in the city, taking the Lord's word at par value, left and went to Pella in Transjordan. After their departure, the Roman forces again besieged the city until it finally was taken with great loss of life. But not one drop of Christian blood was shed in the final collapse.

The instructions concerning speedy flight from Jerusalem here given are similar to those that occur in the accounts by Matthew and Mark of the prediction which pertains to the last days. Why the similarity? The answer is that a like situation produces similar results. At the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A. D., the law of Moses was in force. People weighed down with burdens

and responsibilities could not escape quickly at that time. Neither will they be able to do so in the time when the Antichrist sets up his image in Jerusalem. In the last days the Jewish law likewise will be in force in Palestine and the people will be hindered from escaping from the country then as they were in the year 70 A. D.

According to verse 24 the armies attacking Jerusalem would slay many of the inhabitants and the rest would be led into captivity among all the nations. That calamity, said Jesus, would be the beginning of the time during which Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles. This period called "the times of the Gentiles" is the Christian era. Properly speaking, however, in the light of Daniel 2 and 7 the times of the Gentiles began with the Babylonian captivity and will continue until the kingdom of God is established upon the earth. Since our Lord was speaking of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., He said that the Holy City would be trodden down during the remaining years of "the times of the Gentiles."

The expression, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," carries the necessary inference that, when those times are fulfilled, Jerusalem will no longer be trodden down by the nations. This promise involves the rise of Zionism and its obtaining control of the Holy Land. Whenever, therefore, Palestine reverts to the Jewish people, the times of the Gentiles will have run their course. At that time God will begin to deal especially with Israel by bringing His purging judgments upon her. In the fiery trials of that time the wicked will be purged from the nation and it will be purified.

One must not confound "the times of the Gentiles" with the expression "the fulness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25). The context of this latter expression, as with that of the former, must be consulted if one wishes to ascertain the force of this phrase. In Romans 11 Paul discusses the flowing out of the spiritual blessings to the Gentiles while the Jews are in disbelief. The hardness which has come upon Israel because of her rejection of the truth is only partial and for a limited time—until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, i. e., until the full opportunity has been given to the Gentiles to call out from them a people for the Lord's name.

Thus in Luke 21:20-24 we find a definite answer to the first question "when will these things be?" When, therefore, Jerusalem is encompassed by armies (not simply when a foreign foe invades the land), you can know, declared Jesus, that the predic-

tion concerning the destruction of the temple together with the city will be fulfilled. As already seen, this prophecy came to pass in the year 70 A. D. In the next chapter I shall discuss our Lord's answer to the second query as presented by the three evangelists.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SIGN AND THE EVENING GLOW OF THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE

**I**N THE preceding chapter I have given my own translation of the Olivet discourse and the necessary explanatory notes. In the present one I will enter into a discussion of the text itself which deals with the answer to the second question.

#### I. THE SIGN OF THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE

The proper approach and prerequisite to the understanding of the Olivet discourse are a correct understanding of the significance of the terms found in the question put by the apostles to our Lord.

##### A. *The Question Defined*

A clear understanding of a proposition is essential to logical thinking. Hence we will now examine the principal terms of this prediction.

##### 1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIGN

The Lord and the apostles described fully and minutely the outstanding characteristics of the end of this age. This information God has revealed to us in order that we might recognize the approaching end. That there may be no misunderstanding and hasty conclusion drawn, the Lord has given us what is correctly called *the signs of the times*. There are, therefore, a number of signs set forth in the Scriptures which indicate the approaching time of the consummation. Any one of them correctly interpreted and evaluated is positive proof of the closing of the age. For His disciples that they might not make any mistake and for our benefit also, our Lord has given us many different signs. In this matter He has acted upon what is termed "the law of the witnesses." According to the Mosaic code, every word and matter had to be established by two or more witnesses. This precautionary measure reduces the possibility of doubt and uncertainty to the minimum. In our case the Lord wants to eliminate all uncertainty so that His people might recognize the great consummation.

Among the many signs designated in the Scriptures might be mentioned the following: First, the Regathering of Israel before the great and terrible day of the Lord come (Zeph. 2:1-3).

Second, the Rise of anti-Semitism throughout the world which is foreshadowed in Psalm 83:1f. The same thing is found in Ezekiel 20: 33-39, which tells of God's bringing Israel out from among the nations into "the wilderness of the peoples." To accomplish this result the Lord will use anti-Semitism but, of course, He will punish those who have such a spirit. This gathering of Israel into the wilderness and entering into judgment with her comes at the end of this age and during the Great Tribulation. Third, the Great Apostasy (II Thess. 2: 1-12). This deflection consists of a general movement of men from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, which prepares the way for and culminates in the personal Antichrist. Fourth, the Prevalence of Spiritism (I Tim. 4: 1-3). At the first coming of our Lord to the earth and during His personal ministry God permitted Satan to act within the human realm in a special manner to the end that, after the testimony for the truth is given, there might be a margin for the exercise of faith on the part of the truth-seekers. Fifth, the Moral Breakdown of Civilization (II Tim. 3: 1-9). When an authoritative religion such as that revealed in the Scriptures is thrown into the discard, the inevitable result is that of a moral and spiritual breakdown of civilization. Sixth, the Conflict between Labor and Capital (James 5: 1-6). These two classes have always existed and there has been perpetual antagonism between them. According to James, it becomes very pronounced in the end time between those who have accumulated vast fortunes on the one hand and the great laboring classes on the other. Seventh, the Rise of Lawlessness and the Corresponding Decrease and Decay of Civil Government and Authority. This prediction is found in Daniel 2, which gives a description of the metallic image, the symbol of the four world-empires. The legs consist of iron but the feet and the toes of iron and miry clay. This brittle or miry clay has no cohesive power; hence, though there is in it the strength of iron, there is also the element of weakness, which is symbolized by the clay. Since we see the injection into all governments of an extreme socialized democracy with its discontent and disorganization, we may be certain that this condition is signified by the clay.

There are other indications of the closing age which are set forth in the Scriptures, but the ones enumerated in the paragraph above are the outstanding signs of the times. Doubtless the apostles, when they asked this question, knew of all these or, at least,

some of them. On the occasion of which we are studying they did not ask concerning some of the signs or certain of the signs of His coming and of the end of the dispensation. On the contrary, they were very specific and asked for *the* sign of the end of the age. In the Greek the definite article has almost the force of a demonstrative pronoun in English; thus, by the use of the article the apostles asked for what might be termed the definite, infallible, unmistakable sign of His coming and of the end of the world. In other words, they requested information concerning some event or sign which could be designated properly as the outstanding indication of His coming and of the end of the world. "*Parousia* and *suntéleia tou aiōnos* are the technical terms of the apostolic age, for the second advent of Christ and the close of the present order of things, and they occur in Matthew only, so far as the Gospels are concerned."—A. B. Bruce, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p. 289a.

## 2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXPRESSION, "THY COMING"

The word used by the apostles is *parousia* which in the original is a composite term and literally means "to be present with or by the side of." Such is the import of this word in the Koine, the vernacular Greek of our Lord's day. From this question it is evident that the apostles expected some event or miraculous sign which would indicate the nearness of the Lord's return.

## 3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXPRESSION, "THE END OF THE AGE"

In the ordinary English translation we see the expression, "the end of the world." A footnote of the American Revised Version gives the literal rendering, "the consummation of the age." There are three principal words in the original text which are usually rendered in our different versions by the single word "world." In the Common Version the English reader has no way of knowing which of these words was used. Relief is given to this situation in the Revised Version.

One of these words is *kosmos* and means usually *the earth*, i. e., the physical world with its civilization. Of course, there are shades of ideas expressed by this word. A second word occurring frequently is *oikoumenē*. The significance of this word is *the inhabited earth*. It primarily refers to the physical globe upon which we live but lays emphasis upon its population; hence in the footnote of the Revised Version it is correctly rendered *the in-*

*habited earth* (Heb. 2:5). The third word of popular usage is *aiōn*. This term primarily means *age, era, or dispensation*. It, like other words, presents different shades of meaning. In my discussion on page 170f I have examined the varying hues of ideas signified by this last but most important word, the misunderstanding of which is causing havoc within conservative ranks. It behooves the intelligent Christian who loves his Lord and his Bible to study this word and to understand its import.

It is a matter of great significance that the apostles used this last word which primarily means an age or dispensation of time. By their choosing it we see that they were not thinking of the destruction or the dissolution of the earth but were simply asking about the present era, which at that time was dawning. The translators of the American Standard Version, therefore, have rendered an invaluable service by placing in the footnote "the consummation of the age" as the literal rendering of the original Greek. In view of the fact just stated, it is evident that the apostles were not thinking of what is popularly termed "the judgment day" or "the end of the world." They were, rather, speaking of the consummation of our present dispensation or era.

In the light of what has just been said it is clear that the apostles were thinking in terms of our Lord's return to earth, of His bringing the present dispensation to a close, and of His ushering in a new era. It is also abundantly obvious that they were also expecting some sign which would be indicative of the nearness of the time for the return of the Lord and of the new era. Therefore, spontaneously they asked for *the sign* which would indicate the nearness of these two stupendous events.

#### 4. THE BACKGROUND OF THE DISCOURSE

Everything must be observed from the proper point of view. For instance, a portrait or oil painting must be studied from the correct perspective; otherwise the significance of the scene and its beauty cannot be appreciated. The Olivet discourse, especially the questions of the apostles, can never be correctly understood unless they are viewed from the proper perspective and unless the real Scriptural background is thoroughly comprehended. What is this background? Is it possible for us to reconstruct it today?

##### a. *The Law of Association of Ideas*

One of the fundamental principles of psychology is that known as the association of ideas. This law is operative in every thinking

process by associating mental images, even those remotely related. The mention of a given thought immediately brings into consciousness other related ones. To illustrate this principle may I call attention to an experience which I constantly have? Whenever I meet people who are acquainted with my wife and family, the first thing that these friends do, after they greet me, is to ask about the welfare of my people. They do not ask me concerning other men's families but simply about my own. My presence instantly suggests them; hence, the inquiry. According to this law, evidently the destruction of Jerusalem was associated very intimately with the hope of the Lord's coming and the end of the age. "The questioners took for granted that all three things were together: destruction of the temple, advent of the Son of Man, end of the current age"—A. B. Bruce, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. I, p. 289a. What is the basis for such an association of ideas?

#### b. *Old Testament Background*

In Zechariah 14 we have a very vivid, graphic picture of the closing scene of this age, which is known as the day of the Lord. In verses 1 and 2 we see a prediction of the last siege of Jerusalem in this period of wrath. At that time the Lord by His overruling providence will bring all nations against Jerusalem to battle. The besieging forces will be successful in battering down the defenses of the city: "and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." In this statement appears the prediction of the terrible havoc that will be wrought in Jerusalem and its environs. At the critical moment when victory for the besieging forces will seem to be within the enemy's grasp, the Lord will suddenly appear upon the scene. His feet, according to verse 4, will stand upon the mount of Olives:

"Then shall Jehovah go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the mount of Olives shall be cleft in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

At that time there will be a day the like of which has never been before and never shall be thereafter.

The Lord who makes His sudden appearance at that time and who stops the fighting will become King over all the earth. Upon

his causing wars to cease, He lifts the curse and establishes His glorious kingdom and authority throughout the world: "And men shall dwell therein, and there shall be no more curse; but Jerusalem shall dwell safely" (vs. 11).

When one reads this chapter, he sees that three outstanding points loom mountain high before him: first, the complete destruction of Jerusalem with the temple; secondly, the sudden coming of Jehovah to this earth and the standing of His feet in that day upon the mount of Olives; thirdly, the conclusion of this age and the introduction of the glorious, millennial era.

Since these three definite predictions are associated in this one prophetic picture, it is a very easy matter to see how the apostles upon our Lord's foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, which we know came to pass in 70 A. D., instantly thought of Zechariah 14. It is true that they misunderstood the Saviour's prediction. When He uttered this oracle, He did not give the time element but simply foretold the fact. Since in the introductory verses of Zechariah 14 appears a prediction of the destruction of the city with the temple, naturally they thought that He was speaking of the demolition of the city of Jerusalem, which will be in the day of Jehovah. Their drawing this hasty conclusion, however, was the occasion of their asking this question and of our Lord's giving us this most illuminating Olivet discourse, which constitutes one of the clearest and plainest outlines of the present age, its close, and the introduction of the new era.

### B. *The Question Answered*

Having analyzed this double question and having seen its significance, we are now prepared to follow our Lord's answer more intelligently.

#### 1. WARNINGS AGAINST FALSE CHRISTS

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah; and shall lead many astray" (Matt. 24: 4, 5).

In view of the fact that the apostles had asked concerning His coming in fulfilment of Zechariah 14, the Lord warned them against false christs. Jewish history especially enumerates a number of false prophets who have laid claims to Messianic honors. Taking advantage of certain conditions, these false leaders have preyed at different times upon the credulity of the Hebrew people

and have claimed to be the Messiah. They have always gained a following—some more, some less. Inevitably the deluded populace has always suffered the effects of disappointment and often political and civil disabilities resulting therefrom. In my book, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*, I have given a cross section of a few of the Messianic movements in Israel which have swept many innocent Jewish people into a vortex of suffering and calamity.

According to our Lord's prediction, there will arise many false christs in the end time, giving themselves out as the expected Redeemer. Of course, as in the past, so in the future—they will gain many adherents. In the verses under discussion, however, our Lord warned His disciples against these pretenders.

## 2. THE SIGN OF THE END OF THE AGE

As seen under section A, the disciples asked our Lord for *the sign* of the end of the age. This question is answered in Matthew 24: 6-8; Mark 13: 7, 8, and Luke 21: 9-11. The passage in Mark, however, adds nothing to that found in Matthew's record. On the contrary, Luke emphasizes a point or two which supplement the information found in Matthew; therefore, to get the essential facts we must study both Matthew and Luke.

### a. *Analysis of Matthew 24: 6, 7*

Since so very much is involved in this question, it becomes necessary for us to analyze each of these most important passages, defining the principal terms.

#### (1) "Wars and rumors of wars."

What is the meaning of the expression, "wars and rumors of wars"? Evidently, these words carry the regular connotation, signifying conflicts between certain nations, just such sanguinary encounters as are recorded in history from time immemorial. The term, "wars," of course, indicates actual combats whereas "rumors of wars" connotes the brewing of conflicts.

#### (2) "The end."

As has already been noted, "end" in this question signifies the end of the age, the present era during which our Lord is absent. Since the verses under consideration are the answer to the question, "end" evidently indicates the end of the dispensation concerning which the question was asked.

## (3) "For."

The word *for* is most frequently abused greatly. When used as a conjunction, it is all but universally neglected. The clause or sentence which it introduces is always explanatory of that which has gone before. Recognizing the special function of this conjunction, one must study carefully the preceding context to ascertain how much of that which has preceded is explained by the sentence thus introduced.

## (4) "Nation . . . against nation."

What is the significance of the phrase, "nation . . . against nation"? Since, as we have seen, the background of this passage is found in the Old Testament, especially such passages as Zechariah 14, we possibly may be able to gather information which will determine its meaning here. In this connection we must bear in mind that our Lord, humanly speaking, was a Jew, brought up in the atmosphere of the Old Testament and Jewish theology of the day. Also we must remember that the apostles living in the same environment thought in terms of the Old Testament and current Jewish conceptions. One's type of thought reflects his environment and age. The significance of this expression is to be found in the Old Testament.

This phrase is a pure Hebraic idiom which occurs in two passages of the Old Testament. The earlier quotation appears in Isaiah 19: 1-4,

"The burden of Egypt. Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians; and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel Lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts."

Let the reader note that this passage is an oracle which pertains only to Egypt; hence before the prophet's vision there loomed a situation which would arise in Egypt in the future from his point of view. In this foreview the prophet saw the time when God would "stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor." From these words it is evident that the prophet foresaw a civil war that would rend Egypt from one end to the other.

Another point which we must notice in this connection is the

significance of such terms as "every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor." Are we to understand from this prediction that the time would come when there would be a civil war in which absolutely every individual in Egypt would be engaged? In order to understand this phrase we must remember that there are two uses of language: first, the absolute, and secondly, the relative. As an illustration of the former type, picked at random, let me call attention to the names of the apostles found in Matthew 10: 2-4 and the statement which follows in verse 10—namely, "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into *any* way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans," etc. In the verses referred to we see a list of the names of the twelve disciples and in the one quoted appears the statement that these twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them not to go into the way of the Gentiles. This language is very specific and every word is to be taken in its absolute sense; otherwise, human speech means nothing. On the other hand, as an illustration of the relative use of language I wish to note the statement found in Matthew 3: 5-7,

"Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

In verse 5 we are told that "Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about the Jordan" went out to John's preachings and were baptized by him. From this language are we to understand that every individual in Jerusalem, Judæa, and the section around the Jordan went out to John's services and were baptized by him in the Jordan? The seventh verse, however, qualifies the two preceding ones by saying, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism," he called them an offspring of vipers and asked who warned them to flee from the coming wrath. From this it is evident that there were exceptions to this universal statement concerning all the people's going out and being baptized of John. This position is confirmed by Luke's statement (7: 29, 30) which declares that:

"And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him."

From these two examples we see that there is the relative as well as the absolute use of language. The context and the facts

connected with the situation must be studied in order to arrive at the correct conclusion. These facts alone can render the final decision as to which usage is to be understood. In this connection I feel that it is necessary for me to repeat the statement that the fundamental rule of interpreting all languages is to take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual literal meaning unless the facts of the context indicate clearly otherwise.

Is the expression, "every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor," absolute or relative language? In all wars the major portion of a nation, as a rule, is involved but not necessarily. I know not of any conflict in which every single individual participated actively. In view of these facts it seems that the expression under discussion is to be taken in the relative sense of the term, indicating the great majority of the people.

After having told us of the conflict which would arise in Egypt and which would involve the greater number of the nation, then the prophet spoke in general terms and used the idiom which we are now studying. In this case he worded his expression as follows: "city against city, *and* kingdom against kingdom." From all these facts it is clear that the prediction indicated a general war in which the major portion of the nation would be involved and which would rend the entire country from end to end.

The other example of this idiom is found in II Chronicles 15: 1-7,

"And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: but when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in: but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded."

The verses quoted above give us an interview Azariah had with King Asa at a time of national victory. The prophet went to the king to deliver from the Lord a message to the following effect: "Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (II Chron. 15:2). This statement is a declaration of the fundamental principle of God's dealing with the human family.

The prophet then began to interpret to the king God's dealings with Israel in the past. Thus he looked backward to a period of apostasy when the prophetic voice ceased in Israel. This period of the dearth of God's Word was finally broken when the Lord brought His judgments upon the nation: "but when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them" (vs. 4). In speaking of this period of judgment the prophet said, "And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in: but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity" (vss. 5, 6). In this former time of distress, which terminated this period of apostasy, a general upheaval in "the lands" occurred. Since the prophet was speaking of Israel's past history, evidently Palestine was the center of this general uprising and free-for-all conflict. The lands adjoining it on the north, the east, and the south undoubtedly are included in the expression, "the lands." The man in Judæa who wished to escape the calamities of the times and attempted to leave the country by going into some other land did not escape the horrors of war but ran into worse troubles. The same thing was true, for instance, if one in Moab wished to escape the sufferings of the times by entering the land of Israel, for there he found no relief but the same situation. This general political upheaval in the form of war involving the lands before the prophet's vision can be interpreted as nothing other than a general conflict affecting those nations. Practically speaking, all of them were in conflict. The facts of the context, however, do not require us to think of this language as being used in the absolute sense. On the contrary, the probability is that the statements are used with a relative meaning. This major conflict involving Palestine and adjacent countries is described in the following language: "And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity" (vs. 6).

From these two examples it is clear that the idiom, "nation against nation, and city against city" signifies a major conflict involving all of the territory before the prophet's gaze. Since in the Olivet discourse our Lord had a world-vision, as is evident from the context, we are forced to the conclusion that this idiom on His lips signified a major conflict that would involve practically all the world. This language also conveyed to the apostles' mind

the prediction of a major conflict among the nations that can properly be spoken of, in modern phraseology, as a world war. From the significance of its use in the Old Testament we are not to conclude that it is a forecast of a conflict in which every single nation is involved but rather the majority of the nations.

From the Old Testament predictions the Jew concluded that there would be a general war involving the nations immediately preceding the establishment of the great Kingdom age. To make this point clear I will give only two quotations:

"At that time wars shall be stirred up in the world; nation shall be against nation, and city against city; much distress shall be renewed against the enemies of the Israelites" (Zohar Chadasch).

"If you shall see kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed, and note the footstep of the Messiah" (Bereseh Rabba).

(5) "Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes."

What is the significance of these words and how can they be interpreted as an integral part of "the sign of the end of the age"? Words are to be taken at their primary, usual meaning unless the context indicates otherwise. But have there not been famines, pestilences, and earthquakes throughout all history? The annals of the past show that there have been many such calamities which have afflicted the earth. This statement being true, how then can these things be a sign of the closing era? The only way in which they can be, in view of the passage just noted, is for them to appear in an intensified, heightened, and increased form at the close of the age. Therefore, let it be remembered that nation rising against nation, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are the four things which constitute *the sign* of the closing era.

(6) "All these things."

The Greek translated "all these things" is *panta tauta*. To what do these words refer? According to a well-recognized principle of language, they can, unless there is evidence in the immediate context indicating otherwise, refer only to that which has immediately preceded. As seen under the last subdivision, a world-war attended by pestilences, famines, and great earthquakes in divers places are the things mentioned immediately above in the context. Therefore, according to grammar, "all these things" can refer only to a world-war, famines and earthquakes—all occurring at the same time in an intensified and heightened form.

(7) "Beginning of travail"

In the common Version of the Scriptures the original is rendered "beginning of sorrows." This phrase is very indistinct. It

is like a smoked glass. Should we take this translation, what are we to understand by it? In this context it is hazy, indefinite, and without any specific meaning. The Revised Version comes to our rescue by a clear-cut definite rendering, which is "the beginning of travail." This translation is an accurate representation of the original. Upon the lips of our Saviour and in the ears of the apostles, what did this expression signify? We are to suppose that the Saviour meant by it and the apostles understood from it the current meaning of the day. In our interpreting language we must always bear in mind that people use words and phrases with their common significance unless there is positive evidence in the context indicating a departure from the normal, ordinary connotation.

The proper clue to the understanding of this phrase is to be found in the language of the prophets. We have already seen that the background of the Olivet discourse is to be found in the imagery supplied by the Old Testament. To what use did they put this expression? The desired information may be found in such passages as Isaiah 66: 7-9,

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? shall a nation be brought forth at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith Jehovah: shall I that cause to bring forth shut *the womb*? saith thy God."

This passage must be studied in the light of its context. A rapid perusal of chapters 65 and 66 shows that the subject matter of these predictions pertain largely to the purging of all sinners from Israel and the Great Tribulation which immediately precedes the glorious millennial age—the new heavens and the new earth.\* In

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\*The new heavens and the new earth spoken of in Isaiah 65: 17 refer specifically to the millennial heavens and earth. The force of this position is seen by the fact that verse 17 begins with the conjunction "For." Whenever a sentence is thus introduced, it is evident that the statement is explanatory of that which has preceded. When we look at the immediate context, we see that the prophet was speaking of God's preserving a remnant of Israel (verse 9) through the purging process of the Great Tribulation in order that it may inherit His mountains. The cleansing fires of the tribulation are mentioned in verses 12-15. In verse 16 appears a glimpse of the millennial age when the troubles of the present era are hidden from God's eyes and are forgotten by men. Since verse 17 is explanatory of 16, it is clear that the new heavens and the new earth referred to can signify nothing but the millennial heavens and earth.

The millennial heavens and earth must not be confounded with the new heavens and the new earth foreseen by John in Revelation 21-22. The latter passage refers to the eternal heavens and earth.

our passage Zion is represented as an expectant mother upon whom the birth-pains have come. The prophet in a very dramatic manner (vs. 7 and first half of 8) stated that this woman brought forth her child without any labor pains. He put his message in this manner in order to make it more forceful. He made a statement, the incorrectness of which assertion was obvious. All good teachers, in order to spur the intellect of the student, at times use the same method. This principle is a sound pedagogical law. The prophet's audience would retort that the thing was impossible—that it was contrary to nature. Their imagination would be able to make the comparison between childbirth and the experiences through which Israel will yet pass in the future.

In further pursuit of this investigation, let us examine the following sentence: "for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. In verse 7, as noted, the prophet made a statement which was exactly contrary to nature. In the former part of verse 8 he asked four questions, all of which demanded a negative answer. The concluding sentence of this verse is "for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." This translation is not the very best although it is grammatically correct. The words translated, "for as soon as" also mean "when." The choice of these renderings must be determined by the flow of thought. In my judgment the latter accords with the facts here presented more accurately than the text reading which has been adopted by our translators. This position becomes the more obvious when we realize that the question "Shall a land be born in one day?" demands a negative answer. No, a land cannot be brought forth in a day. Zion, therefore, must go through the period of travail. When the birth-pangs come upon her, she will have to pass through that ordeal. The sentence which we are now considering, however, shows us that when the birth-pains do come upon Zion, they will not be false ones but will indicate that her time to be delivered is at hand. Therefore the rendering "when" is more in keeping with the facts of the context. This position is confirmed by the question appearing in the following verse, "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth?" These rhetorical questions of verse 9 also demand a negative answer. God, the author of childbirth as the method of propagating the human family, does not thwart His plans by bringing the expectant mother to the period of travail and then stop nature in its course; but having a definite purpose in this unfolding of the new life does, notwithstanding the

pain and suffering, continue the process until delivery. Thus it shall be with Zion. Before the new Israel—the faithful remnant—can be brought out into the larger and freer life of the great millennial age, the nation must pass through the period designated as childbirth. In this passage, therefore, the period of distress constantly spoken of by the prophets as “the day of Jehovah” is here set forth under the symbolism of childbirth.

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, likewise used this same illustration in chapter 4:23-31. In verses 23-26 he described a vision of the world—a scene of utter destruction:

“I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved to and fro. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful field was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of Jehovah, and before his fierce anger.”

Verse 27, beginning with the conjunction “For,” explains the significance of this vision. The description begun in this verse continues through verse 31, which uses the figure of childbirth to refer to this Great Tribulation or the day of Jehovah.

Hosea likewise used the same figure in chapter 13:12-14.

“The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is laid up in store. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death: O Death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.”

In verse 12 the iniquity and wrong doing of Ephraim is stated. He shall suffer the consequences of his sin. In verse 13 the figure of a travailing woman is presented to describe the suffering through which the nation will pass. The words, “for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children,” present a blurred picture. I must admit that the original is difficult to render into the English. A footnote in the Revised Version gives us this rendering: “when it is time, he standeth not in the place of the breaking forth of children.” The picture of childbirth is continued in these words. The mother in labor pain must coöperate with nature; otherwise, the ordeal is prolonged. Some national characteristic is indicated by the words, “he is an unwise son”: that is, Ephraim, the ten northern tribes, is unwise in that he is not willing to coöperate with the God of nature. The prophet foresees the birth of the new Ephraim and recognizes the suffering

through which it must pass in the process of childbirth. During the Tribulation—the birth-pangs—there is no time for the nation to draw back and fight against God. The birth-pangs will be upon her. Nature is going through with the process. To be hesitant and rebellious against God will simply increase the intensity of the birth of the nation. Of course, this language was spoken by Hosea to the ten northern tribes. Had the prophet been talking to the entire nation, he would have used the same figure and included all, as Isaiah after him also did. Though this prediction was applicable to an event now past, it awaits its complete fulfilment in the future. From verse 14 it is clear that he was talking about the Great Tribulation through which Ephraim shall pass, at the end of which period of travail death will be swallowed up in victory. This event, we know, comes to pass when our Lord returns.

Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, used the same figure as is manifest from an examination of his prophecies, chapters 4: 9–5: 3. A study of this passage shows that the travail mentioned in 4: 9, 10 refers to the collapse of Judah under the Babylonian siege which occurred in 606-587 B. C.

“Now why dost thou cry out aloud? Is there no king in thee, is thy counsellor perished, that pangs have taken hold of thee as of a woman in travail? Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and shalt dwell in the field, and shalt come even unto Babylon: there shalt thou be rescued; there will Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. . . . Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.”

The prediction of that catastrophe blends with the major one at the end of the age, which is described very vividly and graphically in verses 11-13. In 5: 2, however, the prophet gave the prediction of Israel's Messiah and followed that oracle by saying that the Lord would give the nation up until “she who travaileth hath brought forth.” We are forced by logic to conclude that the tra-vailling mentioned in 5: 3 is none other than the birth-pains mentioned in 4: 11-13.

Other prophets used the same figure of childbirth in describing the judgments of the Great Tribulation period which will come upon the whole world at the end of this age. The old rabbis, whose opinions are crystallized in the Talmud, correctly understood this figure of speech; hence, they in speaking of the coming of Mes-

siah used the expression birth-pangs of "the days of Messiah." They very clearly understood the predictions concerning Israel's sufferings at that time.

Since the figure of childbirth was used by the prophets to indicate the ordeal of the Great Tribulation, and since it is evident from the Olivet discourse that our Lord was thinking of and speaking in terms of the prophetic message, His use of this figure must be interpreted in the light of the prophets' messages. We are forced to accept this significance unless there is positive proof in his message showing that he used it with a different meaning, but a careful study of the language gives no such indication. Therefore we are logically bound to believe that he used this figure with the same meaning, i. e., the travail of which he was speaking is to be understood as the great day of Jehovah.

But what is the significance of the word, "beginning"? According to the figure we would say that the beginning of travail is the first birth-pain—the warning pain. These things, therefore, which are called the beginning of travail stand in relation to the Great Tribulation as does the first birth-pain, the warning pain, to the real labor pains of childbirth.

#### b. *Analysis of Luke 21: 9-11*

Luke's record of the specific statements corresponding to those of Matthew 24: 6, 7 agree very closely with those of the latter:

"And when ye shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified: for these things must needs come to pass first; but the end is not immediately. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be great earthquakes, and in divers places famines and pestilences; and there shall be terrors and great signs from heaven."

##### (1) Same terms appearing here as in Matthew

Matthew records that our Lord used the expression "wars and rumors of wars." According to Luke's statement He also used the word "tumults." "Tumults" carries the idea of rebellions and upheavals in the political world and in other spheres of human activity. The warning against drawing conclusions hastily from these disturbances and wars is similar to that recorded by Matthew. The conditions which produce trouble between nations and groups of people continue to the present; hence, as long as they remain, there will be wars and trouble.

##### (2) Significance of "first"

In speaking of wars and tumults and of their occurring during His absence, our Lord said "these things must needs come to pass

first; but the end is not immediately." The word *first* is very significant. The use of this numeral implies a second thing to be narrated and distinguishes it from the latter; thus the wars and the tumults mentioned in verse 9 are thrown together in one class and are put over against something which He mentions in verses 10 and 11. The wars and the tumults mentioned here can be understood only as rebellions among peoples and wars between nations, i. e., local wars occurring in various places and at different times. This prediction has been literally fulfilled throughout the Christian centuries. Hardly a decade or a generation has passed during the entire dispensation when there has been no tumult, upheaval, or war somewhere in the world. Thus when our Lord said that these things must needs come to pass first, He was talking about the wars of the Christian dispensation and lumped them together as coming to pass *first* before some other event transpires.

### (3) The Significance of the adverb "Then"

In verses 10 and 11 the Lord foretold the rising of one nation against another and of one kingdom against another, which upheaval in the political world will be attended by great famines, earthquakes, and pestilences. Following this mighty conflict "there shall be terrors and great signs from heaven." These verses do not tell us how much time intervenes between this world-war and these heavenly portents. From Luke's record it is clear that the world-war is connected with the closing scenes of the age. Since, as we have already seen, the "wars and tumults" are to come to pass *first*, the world-war mentioned in verses 10 and 11 is thrown over against the wars and the tumults. In the light of this fact the rising of nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom cannot be explanatory of "the wars and tumults." The word "then" introducing verse 10 separates the prediction of verses 10 and 11 from that given in 9.

With this analysis of Luke's record we see that his account supplements that given by Matthew and is in perfect accord with the latter.

### c. *Synthesis of Matthew 24: 6-8; Luke 21: 9-11*

Having seen the significance of each of the principal terms in the records of Matthew and Luke concerning this special oracle, we are now in a position to build the information thus gathered into a single prediction which will give us a chronological scheme of events.

### (1) The Christian Dispensation

Since Zechariah 14 furnishes the background for the Olivet discourse, it is evident that the wars and the rumors of wars foretold by our Lord refer to the various military conflicts which have occurred during His absence. In other words, verse 6 of Matthew 24 covers the entire Christian dispensation. As we have already seen, this era is set off from the end time in Luke 21:9 by the adverb "first."

That the Christian dispensation was foreseen by the prophets is clear from Psalm 110 and many other passages.\* In this illuminating psalm, one of the most fundamental to the proper understanding of the present plan of the ages, appears the entire outline of Messiah's redemptive career. Speaking dramatically, I would say that, when the curtain rises in this psalm, Messiah is seen in the midst of Jerusalem opposed by enemies. When this situation arises, God speaks to Him from heaven, inviting Him to leave Jerusalem and to sit at His right hand until He makes King Messiah's enemies the latter's footstool. When this task is accomplished, Messiah will leave His place in the glory and return to Zion. Upon His return the entire nation will most enthusiastically accept Him. The psalmist David clearly foresaw the period that intervenes between Messiah's first and second comings, during which time He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven. From this and other utterances of the prophets it is clear that a period during which Israel is rejected would separate the two comings of the one Messiah.

In keeping with the Old Testament foreview of the present dispensation, our Lord indicated that it was not His intention to set up His glorious kingdom upon earth at His first coming. This is clearly seen in the parable of the pounds recorded in Luke 19: 11-27. As He went up to Jerusalem, the throngs of people concluded that His going thither indicated the speedy establishment of the kingdom of God. Expectations of this event were running high; therefore, Jesus spoke the parable of the pounds to illustrate the point that the kingdom was not to appear immediately.

"And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and *because* they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them,

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\* For a full discussion of this psalm see my book, *Messiah: His Redemptive Career*.

Trade ye *herewith* till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us" (Luke 19: 11-14).

In this parable the nobleman represents Christ; the far country, heaven; the servants, the disciples of the Lord; the pounds delivered to them, the talents and opportunities for service in His cause; and the returning of the nobleman after having received the kingdom, the return of our Lord when He will establish His kingdom upon the earth. At His second coming He will reward His servants and will apportion their rewards according to their works. This parable, together with others and with the plain statement of our Lord on this occasion, shows that the present Christian dispensation was not an afterthought in the plan of God brought about by His being rejected of the Jews. According to the foreview of events as set forth by the prophets, the Christian dispensation was foreseen and clearly mentioned, but the Church which occupies the central position on the stage during this period was not revealed in the Old Testament. It is true that the prophets foresaw this period of grace, but the turn things would take was withheld from them. At the beginning of our Lord's personal ministry He said little on this point, but, as the hostility against Him grew, He gradually unfolded before His disciples' vision the coming era and finally made a definite prediction concerning the establishment of the church upon the one foundational fact of His being the Messiah, the Son of God. In the Olivet discourse, however, He was speaking of this period of time and of its being characterized by wars and tumults.

A description of the age as one of tumults and wars is set forth in Matthew 24: 6 and blends with a clear vision of its consummation. At the time of the end conditions that have existed throughout the dispensation will be intensified and heightened. The various elements which have characterized it are moving along converging lines which will meet in the end time. The blending of the description of the age with that of its final scenes might be illustrated by the stereopticon which gives the dissolving effect. One picture is thrown upon the screen. As the audience gazes at it, it begins to fade and the dim outlines of another faintly appear. By the time the first one has vanished, the second is in full view. This illustration sets forth the gradual blending of the characteristics of the age with the intensified situation in the end time.

## (2) The Significance of "For"

Having seen that Matthew 24:6 is a description of the Christian age, we are now ready to advance another step and to ask the question: What is the relationship between verses 6 and 7? Two positions are taken; therefore we must make an honest and thorough investigation of both and ascertain which is correct.

## (a) Verse 7 is explanatory of verse 6

Many commentators see in verse 7 an elucidation of the preceding one. They reason as follows: In verse 6 our Lord foretells wars throughout the Christian dispensation and explains His prediction by saying that nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. In other words, verse 7 is explanatory of verse 6. This position is held by many outstanding expositors.

## (b) Verse 7 is explanatory of the last clause of verse 6

Other expositors with equal ability and knowledge affirm that verse 7 is not explanatory of verse 6 but rather of the last clause of that verse. Which of these positions is correct?

We have already seen that the expression, "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," does not signify a series of wars but a general upheaval which affects the entire territory before the prophet's vision. Another fact which we have also learned is that the expression, "all these things," refers to nation rising against nation, pestilences, earthquakes, and great famines.

A third fact which we have noted is that all of these things—a world-war attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places—are the first birth-pain. A fourth discovery which we have made is that the term, "birth-pain," is the technical expression used by the prophets to refer to the Great Tribulation. In view of these four definite facts it is impossible for us to accept the position that verse 7 is an unfolding of verse 6. On the contrary, we are driven to accept the position that verse 7 is explanatory of the last clause of verse 6, for, should we understand "nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" as an exposition of the wars and the rumors of wars, the statement, "all these things are the beginning of travail," would be a contradiction.

## (3) The Sign of the Consummation of the Age

The apostles asked our Lord for *the sign* of His coming and the consummation of the age. This information Christ gave to the disciples in verse 7.

## (a) A World-War Attended by Famines, Pestilences, Great Earthquakes in Divers Places, the First Birth-Pain

As we have already seen, the apostles were thinking in terms of Zechariah 14 and parallel passages. Knowing this fact, our Lord in substance assured them that, when a local war should break out, they should not attach any prophetic significance to it as foreboding the destruction of Jerusalem, His coming, and the consummation of the age. Local wars, if you please, have no prophetic significance because they characterize the entire age; hence, when one breaks out, the disciples of the Lord are not to draw any conclusion as to the nearness of the end of the age. Therefore He said that in the event of a war, the end was not yet. His reason for making this last statement was that when "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"—a general dog-fight of nations which develops into a world-war, attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places—they could know that all of these things constitute the first birth-pain which warns the world and makes it know that the time has arrived for it to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. *The sign* of the end of the age is a world-war attended by earthquakes, pestilences, and famines in proportions never known by the world.

## (b) Has this sign come to pass?

Has there ever been such a war of the magnitude contemplated by this passage? In answering this question some have called attention to the Napoleonic wars. Could those conflicts be said in any wise to fill out the picture of this passage? In my judgment, No. Generally speaking, those conflicts engulfed western and central Europe in a mighty cataclysm. These political upthrusts were for a brief time carried into eastern Europe and even into Egypt, but in no wise could any of those struggles be styled a world-war, or one in the proportions set forth in the prediction.

Could the great war of 1914-1918 be considered the fulfilment of this passage? There is a difference of opinion among scholars. In view of these divergent views it behooves us to be modest and hold ourselves in great reserve. At the same time it becomes necessary for us to study the situation honestly and accurately. How much of the earth's surface and population were drawn into that titanic struggle? All Europe was engulfed with the exception of

the three small Scandinavian countries, Holland, Switzerland, and Spain. All Asia likewise was involved. Since Africa constitutes dependencies of the European powers, all of it was dragged in. In the western hemisphere both Canada and the United States were in the midst of the conflict. Brazil, which constitutes practically half of South America, also was brought in. Argentina was on the verge of entering when the armistice was signed. Four Central American countries likewise were pulled into the conflict by the mighty undertow of strained relations. Four South American nations broke diplomatic relations with Germany about the close of the struggle. Of course, New Zealand and Australia came in, being British possessions. For all practical purposes, therefore, we are bound to admit that the conflict of 1914-1918 did fill out the picture set forth in the prediction. As has already been seen, in our investigation of the idiom, "nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," the prophecy does not require every nation's entrance into the conflict, but it does indicate that the majority of the world will be engulfed in the cataclysm. Therefore, so far as the picture is concerned, the world conflict with its earthquakes, pestilences, and famines did fill out the picture to the full proportion as contemplated in the prediction.

Accepting the above position as true, one may ask if the Scriptures do not foretell several world-wars. In reply I wish to say that this prediction foretells one and in Revelation 6 and 16 appear prophecies of two other major conflicts. According to this data, then, at least three world-wars have been foretold. Some one may ask, Since it is admitted that there are at least three such wars made known in the Scriptures, how can we tell which is the one here foretold as *the sign* of the end of the age? This is a most important question. To answer it, I wish to use the following simple illustration. Suppose my home were located on a highway and you, my reader, were coming to visit me. Not knowing where I lived, you accosted a stranger and sought of him information relative to my house. In reply he would call your attention to the fact that there was a line of telephone posts on the left-hand side of the road and that there were two wires connected directly to each post. He would also call your attention to the fact that you were to pay no attention to these, but that, when you saw a post with a cross-arm, you should look on the opposite side of the highway and see a gate, which would be mine. With such specific

instructions you would thank your friend and proceed. Finally, after traveling several miles and turning a curve in the road, you would see a post with a cross-arm. Then you would look ahead and discover that the next one also had a cross-arm; likewise the third, the fourth, and all the rest. I ask you, dear friend, opposite which one of these posts would you expect to see my gate? This question I frequently put to my audiences and in every instance, without an exception, this answer is always given—the first one. With reference to practical things we use good judgment, but, when it comes to spiritual and eternal verities, we try to enshroud them in mystery and to force upon them an unnatural and a strained meaning. Wisdom, however, would dictate to us that our Lord meant by His instructions to point our attention to the first world-war and intended for us to recognize in it *the sign* of the end of the age.

Someone may ask me if I am certain that the conflict of 1914-1918 was the world-war foretold by our Lord as *the sign* of the end of the age. In reply let me say that I feel absolutely certain I have analyzed our Lord's language correctly. I have followed the principles of interpretation and have taken every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning when possible. About my interpretation of this passage I do not think that there can be any question. I have submitted it to a number of outstanding Bible scholars and have the first one to point out any fallacy in my course of reasoning. The only question that now remains is this: whether or not the conflict of 1914-1918 was the world-war attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes which our Lord mentioned in this passage. In view of the fact that we are fallible creatures and are constantly making mistakes, I wish to be reticent and avoid all dogmatism. I may say, however, that in my own judgment the late war was *the sign* of the end of the age, but I wish the reader to understand distinctly that I am giving this as my personal opinion and judgment. In the light of the information which I now have, I give that as my honest, conscientious opinion. On the other hand, I must frankly say that I am still open to conviction and am eagerly awaiting more light. I do not wish anyone to accept the view which I here set forth but desire that he should study the question thoroughly and honestly for himself and ask God to show him the light in order that he might arrive at his own conclusion.

## II. THE EVENING GLOW OF THE AGE

In this chapter we have been studying *the sign* of the consummation of the age. We have seen that our Lord designated a world-war attended by famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places as the infallible sign of this mighty and impending event. In addition to this unmistakable sign there are other evidences which should be taken into consideration. They are of such moment, I feel, that this chapter would be incomplete without a brief discussion of them.

A. *The Signs in the Physical Realm Before the Day of the Lord*

Joel, a prophet whose ministry fell in the second half of the eighth century before the Christian era, devoted the major part of his prediction to the day of Jehovah. He began his discussion of this theme in 1:15 and continued his prophecy through 2:17. The oracle describes vividly the terrible conflict which will be waged at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. The prophet, transported by the Spirit in vision to the midst of the Great Tribulation, called upon the nation to repent before God. This is seen in 2:12-14. In verses 15-17 he described the observance of a day of prayer, repentance, confession, and humiliation before God on the part of the nation which implores His pardoning, forgiving grace. In verses 18-21 we see that God will answer the petition and come to the rescue. According to verses 21-27 Joel saw the curse lifted from the world, the earth bringing forth its strength, and Israel restored to favor and fellowship with God in her own land.

Beginning with verse 28 the prophet's horizon enlarged; he saw the conversion of the Gentile nations, which event follows Israel's return to God and national restoration. This blessed and greatly desired event is set forth in the following statement: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." God pours out His Spirit in the measure contemplated here only when people accept Him genuinely.

Following this statement just quoted appear these words:

"and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh" (Joel 2:28-31).

The Hebrew word translated "and" at the beginning of this quotation is, in numerous places, rendered "but." The choice of the word is determined by the context and its thought. Beyond question, as seen above, the first statement of verse 28 refers to the conversion of the Gentiles after Israel's restoration. When we read the clause following and verses 29-31, we see that these signs mentioned in the quotation above are to appear before "the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh." The signs in the physical realm are all before the great and terrible day of the Lord. So also are the spiritual manifestations in the form of Jewish young men's seeing visions and the old men's dreaming dreams, etc. The reason for my considering these spiritual manifestations last is that they are connected with those in the physical realm which we have just seen occur immediately prior to the Tribulation. Therefore, they too are located before the Day of the Lord. Otherwise considered they have no significance. Should I be giving a literal rendering of verse 28 I would translate it as follows: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; but your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," etc. It is evident from the drift of thought that all the prediction following the word "flesh" in verse 28 refers to that which will occur prior to the great and terrible day of the Lord.

That this passage foretells great supernatural manifestations in the physical realm is evident from the mere wording of the passage. Since we are to take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless there is evidence in the context indicating otherwise, and since such proof to the contrary is lacking in this case, we are forced to accept the conclusion that these predictions will be literally fulfilled with reference to the signs in the physical realm. These portents will be heralds of the near approach of the day of the Lord.

### B. *The Signs in the Spiritual Realm*

The promise that God will pour out His Spirit upon the Jewish youths and maidens and that the old men will dream dreams evidently refers to spiritual matters. These things are phenomena that belong to the spiritual or psychic realm. We must accept this testimony at its face value; therefore, according to this prediction, we may expect a mighty revival to break out in Israel prior to the bursting forth of the judgments of the day of Jehovah.

Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, likewise fore-

told such a sweeping revival. The leader in this movement of Israel toward God will be Elijah the prophet, as is evident from the following passage:

"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4: 5, 6).

In this connection the following question arises: What will be the means, humanly speaking, used of God to bring about this wonderful ingathering of souls in Israel here scheduled to begin immediately before the great and terrible day of the Lord? All Biblical students know that God employs both men and means to accomplish His purposes—even in the spiritual realm. At the present time He has committed unto men the word of reconciliation (II Cor. 5: 18, 19). When the eunuch was seeking truth, the Lord broke up a revival in Samaria and sent the evangelist Philip to give him the word of the Lord. When Cornelius was praying for more light, He sent Peter to give him the message of life. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." The Word of God is the seed of the kingdom. It is necessary to sow wheat if one desires to harvest wheat; to plant corn, if he wishes to gather corn. Since the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom, and since a spiritual crop is here foretold, evidently this passage assumes a mighty sowing of the Word of God in Israel which will spring forth in this unprecedented spiritual harvest beginning at the very threshold of the Great Tribulation.

Sometimes we hear people saying that we are at the present time in the Great Tribulation. Such a position is incorrect, for these foreboding portents in the heavens and upon the earth together with the sweeping revival in Israel must precede the bursting forth of the judgments of the day of Jehovah. Since they have not occurred, we may be absolutely certain that the day of Jehovah has not begun. This point is a most significant one. Though they have not appeared, let us remember that the world is moving along with kaleidoscopic rapidity and that developments which formerly required centuries can transpire even in a few hours or days. It behooves us who know the Lord and His truth to quicken the tempo of our labors and to do the work of Him who is our Saviour and who has given us a specific task while we sojourn here upon the earth. Without doubt we are approaching very rapidly the crisis of the world—the day of Jehovah.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE GREAT TRIBULATION

**T**HE term, "the great tribulation," is not Biblical phraseology exactly but rather a theological expression used to designate what in the Scriptures is called "the day of Jehovah" or "the wrath to come." That there is to be a period when God will pour out His judgments upon the world is attested by practically all of the prophets, by the Lord Himself, and by the apostles. Different names are given to it. By Jeremiah it is called, "the time of Jacob's trouble." This period of the pouring out of God's wrath is so very definitely foretold that it is impossible for one to arrive at the wrong conclusion relative to it. In order that we may understand it correctly, I will in the first place call attention to two outstanding passages found in the Old Testament and follow this testimony by the information which our Lord gives in this Olivet discourse.

#### I. AN OLD TESTAMENT FOREVIEW OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

In Isaiah 24: 1-20 we have a very full and detailed description of this terrible time when God pours out His wrath upon the nations. In the limited space it will be impossible for me to go into a minute description of the prediction; hence I shall call attention only to its high points. The first is stated as follows: "Behold, Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof" (vs. 1). This verse presents a vision of the world destroyed by some great cataclysm. This desolation is that which is foretold in Jeremiah 4: 23-31.

According to verse 2, all people will share alike at that time. Doubtless this will be due to the fact that all will be living on the same moral plane, practically speaking. Following this revelation, verses 3 and 4, we see the prophet reiterating, though using different figures, the thought of verse 1 relative to the complete destruction of civilization. In verse 5, however, he gives the reason which necessitates the Lord's blotting out the present-day civilization—namely, the moral pollution of the world and the transgression of all laws and the breaking of the everlasting covenant. The Lord God Almighty being Holy, He must punish sin and vindicate His

holiness. In many passages of Scripture we see that in the latter days the world becomes worse and worse and that iniquity and sin become the order of the day. According to verse 6, this punishment which the Lord brings upon the world will destroy the bulk of its population—in fact, we are told here that the inhabitants of the world are “burned, and few men left.” From other predictions we see (vss. 7-13) vivid, graphic descriptions of the horrors that will exist and the sufferings and privations through which the people of the world are destined to pass during the Tribulation. Every thing will be in an abnormal condition: nature will seem, as it were, out of joint and the sufferings will be intense.

“Every cloud has a silver lining.” The silver lining to the clouds of the Great Tribulation will be the mighty, sweeping revival that will at that time encircle the globe. This great conquest of truth is set forth in verses 14-16a. The beginnings of this movement toward God is seen by the prophet to be in the country west of Palestine. Immediately, it sweeps on into the Holy Land. From there it, like ever-widening waves, moves to the uttermost parts of the earth. Myriads of people will come to the Lord during that time of judgment notwithstanding the odds against them. “When God’s judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness” (Isa. 26: 9).

In the latter part of verse 16 the prophet’s heart is wrung by the terrible distress which comes upon the world. According to verses 17 and 18, escape from one calamity is no guarantee of future preservation, for the following judgment will usually sweep one into a Godless, Christless grave.

The last sentence of verse 18, “for the windows on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble,” indicates that there will be great changes and convulsions in nature—in the heavens above and upon the earth. The description of the havoc and the devastation that will be wrought upon the earth, especially toward the end of the period, is set forth in the following words: “The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently” (Isa. 24: 19).

All nature will be out of joint and a lack of coördination will be manifest in the material, physical universe, for “The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again” (vs. 20). Our planet that has been moving without variation in its orbit throughout the millenniums

will cease to travel with the same precision and regularity; from its orbit it will swerve toward the sun in one instance and from it in another—as a drunken man staggers along the road. This throwing of the physical universe out of its equilibrium is again compared to the swinging to and fro of a hammock. All of these movements and irregularities in nature will bring about great distress upon men and destruction of the present order.

The closing scene of the Tribulation will be brought to an end by the personal appearance of the Messiah from heaven; then by His mighty angels the spirits of the high ones on high will be incarcerated in the pits of darkness and at the same time the kings of the earth will be cast into Sheol. All of them will await the time of punishment after “many days.” Thus when these hosts of rebels against God are banished from the world, the Messiah will inaugurate His reign of righteousness in Jerusalem. His kingdom then will extend throughout the world and He will reign from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

Another vivid picture of the Great Tribulation is set forth by the prophet Zephaniah in 1: 14-18:

“The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of Jehovah; the mighty man crieth there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities, and against the high battlements. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Jehovah; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he will make an end, yea, a terrible end, of all them that dwell in the land.”

Note that this time of trouble is called, “the great day of Jehovah.” At that time the mighty men will cry out in anguish very bitterly. According to verse 15 it will be “a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” Not only will there be disorders in the natural realm but also there will be added to them the horrors of war and devastation by the plagues of the times.

The reason assigned for such a period of trouble is that men have sinned against God. His holiness demands that they be punished for their sins. At that time men’s wits and their ingenuity will not avail. They will reap what they have sown.

The two passages just examined are only samples of the many

that appear throughout the Old Testament but these suffice to give an idea of the graphic manner in which the prophets foretold this coming Great Tribulation.

## II. THE GREAT TRIBULATION AS PRESENTED BY JESUS

Having drawn for us a graphic presentation of the sign of the end of the age, our Lord immediately introduced us to the judgment of the Great Tribulation. Matthew gives us a fuller statement of those matters than do the other two writers; hence in this connection I shall hold strictly to his account.

### A. *The General Statement of Matthew 24: 9-14*

In Matthew 24: 9-14 we have a general yet brief statement of the Tribulation period. Our Lord, having designated for us *the sign* of the end of the age which is also the first birth-pain, gave us a bird's-eye-view of the outstanding events of the period of travail, the Great Tribulation.

#### 1. PERSECUTION OF THE SAINTS

In verses 9 and 10 the Lord foretold a great persecution which at that time will be brought against His disciples. Sometimes we are accustomed to thinking that the persecution of the children of God is a thing of the past—that the days of martyrs were in the early centuries of the present era. Such an idea is incorrect for the age will close with persecutions similar to those at the beginning but on a wider scale. During those turbulent days many of the saints will be slain. There will be, according to verse 9, a general hatred of the children of God on the part of all the nations. Because of these persecutions many of those who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus will stumble. In this connection our Lord foretold that one Christian would deliver up another to death. Such appalling conditions are beyond our comprehension at the present day, but according to His Word we are to expect this situation to arise.

#### 2. THE RISE OF FALSE PROPHETS

Satan always preys upon men during times of trial and testing. In the Great Tribulation when men will be seeking for advice to find "the way out," Satan will have his emissaries in the form of false prophets and teachers. This very warning was given by the Apostle Paul in I Timothy 4: 1f. Satan has always operated in

the dark corners of the earth throughout this present dispensation. As the darkness of the present age settles down upon the world, he will become especially active. Men in their blindness and eagerness to find the way out of their difficulties will resort especially to these who promise deliverance; instead of granting release these false teachers energized by Satan will only lead and bring them into bondage. Let the follower of our Lord at the present time beware of all things that border on the occult because God has warned us against them.

### 3. THE INCREASE OF INIQUITY

The Scripture testimony is very clear with reference to the great increase of iniquity and wrongdoing in the end time. That we are approaching this era is evident to everyone who is keeping abreast of the times. It seems that the aftermath of the war brought a trail of crime, wickedness, and sin such as the world never experienced. According to the prophetic Word we may expect yet a mighty increase of iniquity and lawlessness. Conditions which now prevail are very mild in comparison with the full development of crime and immorality during the Tribulation period.

### 4. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

In verse 14 we see the following marvelous prediction: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come." Immediately our interest is aroused and several questions come to mind. What is the significance of the expression "this gospel of the kingdom"? By whom will it be proclaimed? What is the purpose for which it will be preached, especially in the Tribulation? These and many other questions arise in the mind of the thoughtful person.

What is the significance of the expression, "gospel of the kingdom"? In the Scriptures we read of the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom of God, the gospel of the grace of God, and the everlasting gospel. Do all of these phrases refer to the same message of glad tidings? I am inclined to believe they do. In my judgment there is but one gospel and these various expressions refer to it, but the wording of each expression is determined by the angle from which this one message is viewed. The choice of phraseology also is determined by the place where the emphasis is put. To illustrate with a concrete example, I may speak of a

cafet ria or a cafeteria. Both pronunciations are correct, the difference being that the stress of voice is laid upon a different syllable in each instance. I may again illustrate by quoting Genesis 1 : 1 : "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." I repeat the sentence and lay special emphasis upon the initial phrase—"In the beginning." Again I repeat the statement and place the emphasis on a different word—namely, "God." In the third place I quote the same declaration but lay the stress of voice upon the word "created." In each instance I have said the same thing and yet I have stated something different each time. Thus it is with the gospel. If I am speaking along the line of soul-saving, I look backward to the Cross and dwell upon the sacrifice of Christ for our sins; on the other hand, if I am preaching on prophetic subjects and dealing with the things pertaining to the close of this age and the introduction of the glorious kingdom era, I will be proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, even though I may occasionally mention the glad tidings of the good news of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. This verse, therefore, to my mind simply foretells the proclamation of the gospel to all nations with the emphasis upon the doctrine of the last things. At that time the message will be given to all nations.

By whom will this gospel be preached to all the world in the short period of the Great Tribulation? According to Genesis 12 : 1-3 and passages depending upon it, we see that the plan and purpose of God is to bless all nations through Abraham and his seed. While the word "seed" is used in a restricted sense, referring to King Messiah, it also has the broader, general meaning including all of Abraham's literal descendants. That God intends to bless all nations through Abraham's literal posterity is evident from Psalm 67 : 1, 2,

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us,  
*And* cause his face to shine upon us ;  
 That thy way may be known upon earth,  
 Thy salvation among all nations."

Since this psalm is a petition and looks forward to the great millennial age, evidently the inspired writer delivered his message to Israel for use in her prayer and devotional life during the tribulation period. Thus we have the faithful remnant petitioning the Almighty that His blessings may rest upon it in order that God's salvation might be known among all nations. In keeping with this Old Testament expectation we see that, when Abraham's literal

descendants had the gospel in the first generation of the Christian church, it was preached to the whole world. This is seen from Paul's statement in Romans 10: 16-18. Let it be remembered that he wrote the Roman letter in the spring of 58 A. D., after the gospel had been given to the Jews. In this passage to which I am now referring, Paul declared that the gospel had been preached in the whole world; nevertheless only a few, comparatively speaking, had received it. In the Colossian letter, written in 63 A. D., Paul again spoke, 1: 6, of the gospel and of its bearing fruit in all the world, and, verse 23, of its having been preached in all creation under heaven. In view of these statements we see that in the first generation of this dispensation the gospel was given to the entire world. By whom, then, was it given? What nationality predominated in the early church? All people who are acquainted with the New Testament and church history must acknowledge that the Jews, outnumbering the Gentiles, were the ones who in the early dawn of the Christian era gave the gospel to the whole world.

In 70 A. D. Jerusalem fell. After that catastrophe the Jews, misunderstanding that calamity and interpreting it as evidence of God's displeasure with the nation because it had not pulled up the despised sect of the Nazarene both root and branch, began to turn from the gospel. The complexion of the church was soon changed from a Hebrew institution to a Gentile organism. When the Jews stopped coming into the church in any appreciable numbers, the gospel ceased to flow out to the whole world.

For the past nineteen hundred years the gospel has been in the hands of the Gentiles. They have never one time given it to all nations in any one generation. When, however, the Great Tribulation is upon the earth, according to this prediction, it will be proclaimed to the whole world in the short period of those troublous times. Who will do this vast amount of preaching? In the light of God's announced purpose and in the clear light of past history, we must conclude that the Jews will do it.

At the present time the Jews do not have the gospel. They are in unbelief and, misunderstanding the situation, are hostile to the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since they are to be the future missionaries, the message must be given to them now. They cannot give out that which they do not possess. The fact that they are to be the tribulation evangelists argues that the truth should be given to them now.

That they are the ones who will evangelize the world in the Great Tribulation is also evident from a casual reading of Revelation 7. In the beginning of that chapter we see a vision of 144,000 Hebrew servants of God who are sealed and serving Him under the trying circumstances of that time of great stress and judgment. Immediately following this forecast is an account of a vision granted to John in which he saw an innumerable host of saved people from every nation, tribe, tongue, and language who come out of the Great Tribulation and wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. When the facts are taken into consideration, it becomes obvious that these Jewish evangelists mentioned in the first part of the chapter are the ones who give the truth to this innumerable host from every section and corner of the world.

The purpose of preaching the gospel during the Great Tribulation is twofold: first, to give all honest-hearted truth-seekers an opportunity of accepting the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation through Him; secondly, to prepare for judgment those who will not receive a love of the truth in order that God might be just in bringing upon them the terrific plagues foretold in Revelation. According to our Lord's statement in Matthew 24: 14, we are confident that the gospel will be preached to the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations, and then shall the end come.

##### 5. THE END

The last clause of verse 14 is "and then shall the end come." The end of what? There can be but one answer—namely, the end of the dispensation concerning which the apostles asked. In His reply the Lord Jesus three times mentioned "the end" \* (vss. 6, 13 and 14).

In verses 9-14 our Lord briefly sketched the Great Tribulation period, noting only the moral and spiritual conditions. The physical judgments that will come upon the earth at that time are described in the next paragraph (vss. 15-28).

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\* "But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." This passage refers to the Tribulation saints. To apply it to any one today is to wrench it out of its connection. Only those who endure to the end of the Tribulation will be saved. But who are the ones enduring to the end? The fiery trials of the great ordeal then upon the world can be endured only by those who have been genuinely regenerated and in whose heart the Spirit of God dwells. They are the ones who will endure to the end and who will be saved.

*B. The Detailed Statement, Matthew 24: 15-28*

A graphic picture of the conditions existing during the Tribulation is to be found in Matthew 24: 15-28, Mark 13: 14-23, and Luke 21: 25-28. These passages give special attention to the phenomena which will occur in the physical realm. Matthew and Mark call our attention to the warnings and exhortations necessary for the people at that time; hence they emphasize the practical aspect of the instructions. Luke, on the other hand (21: 25-28), covers the Tribulation but devotes his entire attention to the unusual phenomena which will obtain both in the heavenly bodies and upon earth before, during, and at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. When one notices that verse 25 takes up the thread of thought that was dropped with verse 11, and when he interprets it in the light of the unfolding of the prophecy, he will see that our Lord was speaking of signs in the physical realm which precede the day of the Lord. Luke, as stated above, devotes his attention to a description of the physical phenomena that obtain at that time and to the dreadful, frightful effects that they have upon the inhabitants of the earth. He blends these unusual portents which precede the Great Tribulation with those during it and those which occur at its conclusion when our Lord manifests Himself in glory. That there is a blending of this physical phenomena is evident from the fact that the description concludes with the prediction concerning the sign of the Son of man's coming in the clouds with power and great glory. This prophecy shows that he is speaking of the glorious appearance of the Lord at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation period. The redemption mentioned in verse 28 refers to the great millennial age and the restoration of all things of which God spoke through the prophets. Unfortunately this passage has been interpreted as referring to the rapture of the Church. When we realize, however, that it is linked with the promise of the visible coming of our Lord to the earth, it becomes evident that it cannot refer to the rapture but signifies His glorious appearance to set up His millennial kingdom upon the earth.

The records by Matthew and Mark, as stated already, are devoted to the problem of human suffering and practical suggestions for those in the midst of the Great Tribulation.

"When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judæa flee unto the moun-

tains: let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house: and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath: for then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or, Here; believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold, he is in the inner chambers; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Whersoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24: 15-28).

The adverb, "When," in verse 15 links this paragraph indissolubly with the adverb "then" in the last clause of verse 14: "then shall the end come. When therefore ye see. . . ." These adverbial connectives weld verses 15-28 to the prediction concerning the Great Tribulation in the end time described in verses 9-14. As we study verses 15-28, we shall see that they are a development and an expansion of the verses 9-14. This fact forever precludes one's understanding verses 15-28 as a prediction which was fulfilled in 70 A. D. when Jerusalem fell under the titanic blows of Titus, the Roman general, and proves positively that this section of Scripture deals with the Great Tribulation in the end of the age.

#### 1. THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIBULATION

A casual glance at verses 15-21 shows that verse 15 takes our thoughts from the end of the Tribulation period mentioned in the last clause of verse 14 and carries them back to its cause. To paraphrase and condense the thought of these verses, I will state it in this way: When you see the abomination set up in the temple you must flee with all speed, for this incident will precipitate the greatest cataclysm of the ages. This statement being true to fact, in verse 15 the reader's mind reverts to the time immediately preceding the outburst of the Great Tribulation. The setting up of the image of the beast, here referred to as the abomination of desolation, is the event which will touch off the powder keg of this day of Jehovah. Our study of verses 15-28 will show us that they describe the period of the Tribulation more fully than verse 9-14. These statements being true, verses 15-28 give us a

more detailed delineation of conditions which will exist during this period of judgment.

Our Lord's giving this second and fuller statement of the Tribulation judgments is an application of what is known by Bible students as "the law of recurrence." This law is such an important one that it becomes necessary for every student of the Scriptures to understand it. To ignore it is to be led into hopeless confusion in many passages. For the benefit, however, of those who are not acquainted with this fundamental rule of interpretation, I will call attention to one example. The first instance is found in Genesis 1 and 2. In chapter 1:1-31 we have a sublime yet brief statement of the original creation (vs. 1), the destruction of the primitive earth (vs. 2), and a concise résumé of the work done during the six days of reconstruction (Gen. 1:1-31). In chapter 2:1-25 appears what the radical critics call a second account of Creation. Such an explanation of the literary phenomena found in these chapters never would have been given, had the scholars recognized "the law of recurrence." A casual reading of these verses reveals the fact that this is not another account of the original Creation gathered from some other source, as the radical, destructive critics tell us, but is a more detailed record of the most important items mentioned in the summary account found in chapter 1. The Scriptures are not a textbook of science but rather a revelation of God concerning redemption and spiritual matters. The Lord in the second chapter gave a more detailed account of the work accomplished on the sixth day. A careful study of the entire passage will prove the truthfulness of this position. The second chapter, therefore, is but an account which supplements that found in the first. In giving us this second record Moses was simply following the "law of recurrence."

Our Lord, Matthew 24:15, in His thinking goes back to the time immediately prior to the bursting forth of the Great Tribulation and tells us the real cause and occasion of God's sending His judgments upon the world at that time. Since this is the truth about the matter, we see here an example of the law of recurrence.

#### a. *The Outbreak of the Tribulation*

In verse 15 our Lord gives us the immediate cause of the Great Tribulation:

"When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation . . . standing in the holy place . . . then let them which are in Judæa flee unto the moun-

tains. . . . But woe unto them that are with child . . . for then shall be great tribulation. . . .”

In order to understand this prediction we must define our terms. What is the significance of the expression “abomination of desolation”? Daniel in chapters 9:27 and 12:11 speaks of the abomination which maketh desolate and of its being set up, but from his writings we cannot gather an idea of the significance of that phrase. This information must be gathered from the records of his contemporaries. Daniel, it will be remembered, was taken to Babylon among the first captives who went in the third year of Jehoiakim. Ezekiel, a contemporary, was carried thither with Jehoiakin eight years later. Since they lived at the same time and in a similar environment, evidently they used words with like significance. In the eighth chapter of his prophecy we see his use of the word “abomination.” This passage presents a picture of the things which were at that time still being done by the Jews in Jerusalem. The Lord in this vision revealed to Ezekiel the different abominations committed by his fellow-countrymen at the temple. The record shows that the abominations which are there mentioned were none other than idols. In 2 Kings 23:12, 13 appears an account of the reforms of faithful King Josiah. The inspired historian recounted the destruction of the various images that were worshiped by the surrounding nations and in each instance called them the abominations of these peoples. From this testimony, therefore, we see that the word, “abomination,” was the technical term, current in the days of Daniel and Ezekiel, used in referring to an idol. Unless, therefore, there is positive evidence to the contrary we must understand that this word in the mouth of Daniel had the same significance as it did in the writings of his contemporaries. Since such negative testimony is lacking, we are driven to the conclusion that “abomination” as used by Daniel indicates an idol. He, in the two passages referred to, mentioned the abomination which maketh desolate. Evidently, then, he was speaking of the setting up of an idol, which blasphemous act will bring about great desolation.

What did Jesus mean by the expression, “holy place”? That term in the days of our Lord and in the preceding centuries was the definite, technical expression used to refer to the sacred place in the temple where the table of showbread and the candlesticks were placed. Since He, in describing the closing scenes of this age, spoke of the setting up of the abomination of desolation in

the holy place, evidently He assumed that the Jewish temple will be standing in the last days. Is this supposition confirmed by a definite prediction from the prophets? Yes. Isaiah 66: 1-6 gives an unmistakable oracle relative to the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in the end time and the reinauguration of the sacrificial system connected therewith:

"Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? For all these things hath my hand made, and *so* all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as he that offereth swine's blood*; he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.

Hear the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake, have said, Let Jehovah be glorified, that we may see your joy; but it is they that shall be put to shame. A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies."

There loomed before the prophet's vision the scene of the rebuilding of the temple. The Lord spoke to those who had the work in charge and asked the following questions: "what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest?" All Hebrew grammarians know that the time element is not expressed by the verb. Only two kinds of action are indicated—namely, completed and incompleted. These questions can just as properly and grammatically be rendered as follows: "what manner of house are ye building unto me? and what is the place of my rest?" By the prophetic Spirit Isaiah was carried forward in vision to the time of the end, saw the work of reconstruction going forward, and directed to those supervising the work the two questions here recorded.

In verses 3 and 4 he saw the sacred structure completed, the old Jewish ritual revived, and the sacrifices being offered. Against this vain worship he entered a protest and showed that those who will be thus worshipping will be distasteful to God and classed them with those who slay a man, who break a dog's neck, and who offer swine's blood. By these comparisons he indicated that their worship will be wholly unacceptable to God. In verse 4 he de-

clared that those engaged in this ritualistic service will be laboring under a delusion. They choose their own way; therefore God blinds their eyes so that they cannot see the truth. Notwithstanding their being sincere in what they are doing, their worship will be unacceptable because they have formerly rejected His will and have chosen their own way. Following this prediction the prophet addressed those "that trembleth at my word," and told them that their brethren who have cast them out and who have sneeringly said, "Let Jehovah be glorified, that we may see your joy," are the ones who shall be put to shame. In this verse he separated the people of Israel into two classes: the majority who are backing the Zionistic program, the reorganization of the nation and the inauguration of the ancient Mosaic ritual; and the minority who tremble at God's Word and who do not fall in line with the nationalistic program. Following this prediction the prophet in a most realistic and dramatic manner announced an outbreak of a great revolt in the city: "A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies." From these words it is clear that the disturbance arises in connection with the rebuilt temple and the worship that will at that time have been reorganized. Taking the whole sweep of the passage into consideration, one sees here that there will be a cleavage of opinion among those who have been supporting the nationalistic program. Great violence will attend the outburst of hostilities. This last verse also gives us the information that God takes a hand in this bold affair, for the prophet in an ejaculatory manner shouted, "A voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies." From these phrases it is clear that God takes a part in that which will transpire at the temple, as here foretold.

From this passage which we have been studying we see that Isaiah in the latter half of the eighth century B. C. foretold the rebuilding of the Jewish temple and the reinstatement of the ancient sacrifices in the end time. Thus in this prediction we find confirmatory evidence which throws great light upon our Lord's prophecy. The Apostle Paul also assumed that the temple would be rebuilt. This fact is seen in 2 Thessalonians 2. In this chapter we see the man of sin sitting in the temple opposing all that is called God or that is worshipped as God and setting himself forth as God. John in Revelation 11 also spoke of the Jewish temple's being in existence in the end time. There can be no doubt that

the Jews whenever they have the opportunity of doing so will build the temple. According to newspaper reports at the present time there is being educated and trained a corps of Jewish youths who will act as priests whenever the temple is *rebuilt*. In the light of the facts presented from these various passages we are to understand that in referring to the holy place, our Lord had in mind the *rebuilt* temple which will be erected before the Tribulation and which will stand during that entire period.

In view of these facts we see that our Lord in Matthew 24: 15 was speaking of the event which will start the Tribulation period. Verse 15, therefore, goes back to verse 9 and begins a new description of the day of the Lord.

In this connection it will be well to notice an explanation which is sometimes given of these passages and which, according to my judgment, confuses the prediction. The position is this: Verses 8-14 give us what is termed, "the beginning of sorrows." This passage, according to the theory, describes the first half of the Tribulation, the first half of Daniel's seventieth week, but verses 15f describe what is termed the Great Tribulation which covers the second half of this week of years. By this theory the law of recurrence is ignored. This explanation, likewise, does violence to the text by detaching verse 8 from 7, which it explains. As stated before, verse 6 covers the entire Christian dispensation, whereas verses 7 and 8 give us the sign of the end of the age which is called the first birth pain. Verse 9 begins a description of the spiritual conditions that will exist upon the earth during the Tribulation. This prediction touches the high points only and carries us to the end of the Tribulation, as seen in the last clause of verse 14. Upon the basis of the information set forth in verses 9-14, our Lord (vs. 15) sounded the warning and instructed His disciples who will be living at that time what they are to do when the image of the world-emperor is set up in the Jewish temple. This blasphemous act being the thing which brings on the Tribulation, Christ told His disciples to flee from Palestine with all possible haste, delaying under no consideration. These facts, therefore, show very clearly that verse 15 takes us back to the beginning of the Tribulation.

b. *The Starting Point of the Tribulation the Middle of the Seventieth Week of Daniel*

"And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease;

and upon the wing of abominations *shall come* one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall *wrath* be poured out upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27).

"And from the time that the continual *burnt offering* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (Dan. 12:11).

In the midst of the seventieth week\* of Daniel the world-dictator will set up his image in the temple. From what we have already seen, it is evident that our Lord in Matthew 24:15 referred specifically to the prediction found in Daniel 9:27. Therefore, this verse from our Lord's lips places the beginning of the Great Tribulation in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. This same position is set forth by Daniel in 12:1-2.

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as 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. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

According to this quotation, when Michael stands up for the Jewish people, the Great Tribulation begins. But when does this archangel, the great protecting spirit of Israel, stand up as here foretold? This question may be answered by a reference to Revelation 12. In this chapter we are told that John saw a great sign in heaven. This "sign" is described as "a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." She was in the throes of child-birth. The second sign is described in verses 3-5: "And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon standeth before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne." Those who know the Scriptures recognize in this man child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron the person of the Hebrew Messiah, the

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\* I am assuming on the part of the reader an acquaintance with the ninth chapter of Daniel, especially the prediction concerning the seventieth week. For a full discussion of this subject I refer the reader to my book, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*.

Lord Jesus Christ. This child not only includes Christ the Head but also the church,—the mystical body of Christ. The Head of the body was caught up to heaven nineteen hundred years ago but, according to verse 5, this child is caught up immediately before the persecution of the woman by the dragon. Evidently this is a reference to the catching up of the body of Christ, the translation of the church, which is prior to the Great Tribulation. Since Christ came of the Jewish race and since the church began in Israel, the woman symbolizes the Hebrew nation. Since the Head was caught up to heaven 1900 years ago, the ascension of Christ is undoubtedly included in the prediction. These facts show that chapter 12 cannot be tied down chronologically to the order of events as they are revealed in the book of Revelation. The Unfolding program of Revelation is found in chapters 6, 8, 9, and 16. Chapter 12 begins the great parenthesis of the book, which consists of 12:1-15:4. These chapters being detached from the chronological order throw a flood of light upon the events of the Great Tribulation. The beginning set forth in these chapters reaches far back into the historic past. For instance, chapter 12 goes back to the birth of our Lord whereas chapter 13 with its companion passage, chapter 17, reaches back to the founding of Rome in 754 B. C. These chapters being in no wise connected with the chronological scheme of the book cannot be forced to support a theory with reference to the time of the rapture of the saints, which asserts that that glorious event will occur in the time of the Great Tribulation. On the contrary, we see from Revelation 12:5, 6 that the catching up of the mystical Christ is prior to the time of the Great Tribulation.

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels *going forth* to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him” (vss. 7-9).

These verses evidently refer to the same prediction made by Daniel in 12:1, 2. In the prophet's statement we are simply told that Michael stands up for the Jewish people, but John informs us that Michael and his angels go forth to war against Satan and that the latter with his cohorts is cast out of heaven to the earth. According to Daniel, when Michael stands up, the Great Tribulation begins. According to John, when Michael and his angels cast out Satan and his host of servile spirits, a period of unex-

amplified suffering begins—especially for Israel whom he persecutes for three and one-half years.

Revelation 12:7-13 describes the event which chronologically occurs between verses 5 and 6. In the arrangement of his material John, in this instance, was obeying the law of recurrence, for it is only after Satan and his hosts are cast to the earth that the woman has to flee into the wilderness where she is protected of God for 1,260 days.

From all the data which is given by Daniel and John in Revelation, we see that the Great Tribulation begins in the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel.

## 2. THE LENGTH OF THE TRIBULATION

Since the setting up of the image of the beast in the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel precipitates the Great Tribulation, it is evident that this time of disaster lasts only three and one-half years. In Revelation 11:2 this same period is referred to as forty-two months, during which the holy city shall be trodden under foot by the nations. In Daniel 7:25 it is called "time and time and half a time."

In this connection the question arises, What will occur during the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel? Will not God's wrath be poured out upon the world at that time? These questions are answered differently according to the point of view. At the present time there is quite a discussion among prophetic students on this point. Hence it behooves each of us to speak with great reserve and modesty. Dogmatism must not for a moment be countenanced.

From Revelation 11:3-13 many have concluded that the 1,260 days during which the two witnesses engage in their ministry coincide with the first half of Daniel's seventieth week and that at the close of this period there is a terrible earthquake which shakes down and destroys one-tenth of the city of Jerusalem. Immediately after this disaster the forty-two months during which the city shall be trodden under foot by the Gentiles begin. If this interpretation is correct, it is quite likely that the earthquake which destroys one-tenth of the city is a judgment which God brings upon the world at the time of the setting up of the Antichrist's image. At this time the Great Tribulation properly begins.

Since at the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17) the people of the world will recognize that the period in which they are

living is "the great day of their (God and Christ) wrath," undoubtedly the judgments described in chapters 6, 8, and 9 are manifestations of God's indignation upon the inhabitants of the earth, but, since the Great Tribulation proper does not begin until the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel, the first half cannot be termed the Great Tribulation. It may be considered as leading up to it.

In this connection it is well to understand the proper relation that exists between the three series of judgments defined in Revelation 6, 8, 9, and 16. When each of the first six seals is opened something definite occurs upon the earth, but when the seventh is broken, nothing transpires in the world; on the contrary, the seven angels in heaven take up their trumpets and prepare to give forth their blasts. In like manner, when the first six of the seven angels sound their trumpets, something definite takes place upon the earth, but at the sounding of the seventh no judgment is hurled earthward; instead seven angels take up their seven bowls of wrath and prepare to pour them upon the earth. Speaking in a figure, I would say that the seven bowl judgments develop out of the seventh trumpet and that in the same manner the seven trumpet judgments are but the unfolding of the seventh seal. If this interpretation of the relation existing between these series of judgments be correct and if we are to consider the testimony of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 as being given during the first half of the great seventieth week of Daniel, whereas the city of Jerusalem is to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles during the latter half of the week, we may conclude that God's wrath will be poured out upon the world during a period of seven years, but that the latter half of that period only can be properly called the Great Tribulation.

According to Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, this period of God's wrath is to be preceded by one of false security. The leaders of the world at that time will think that they have solved all of the problems and ailments which afflict humanity: in their judgment wars will have been outlawed; the social fabric of civilization, ironed out; racial prejudices, obliterated; social inequality and injustice banished from the earth; all economic difficulties, overcome; science will have conquered the mysteries connected with life and happiness; and men will have introduced a new era of peace, plenty, and prosperity. At the time that God's wrath is poured out upon the world, according to our Lord's words

with reference to the Rapture, as we shall see in our study of Matthew 24: 32-44, men will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, and enjoying a false security of peace and happiness.

Should some good brother take the position that the Great Tribulation is to be only during the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week and that the first half is to be a period of false peace and security, I shall have no quarrel with him. I am rather inclined to believe the position I have just set forth to be the correct one. To be able to make out a definite program into which all of the prophecies relating to the end time may be placed as letters in pigeon holes is a most difficult, if not impossible, task; therefore we must be contented with accepting the statement of the Holy Scriptures although we may not be able to work out a definite chronological chart of events.

### 3. THE CLOUDBURST OF GOD'S WRATH

According to Matthew and Mark, when the image is set up in the temple the great explosion occurs. Palestine will be the storm center of this great whirlwind of God's wrath and indignation; therefore our Lord warned those who will be living in Jerusalem and Palestine at that time to flee for their lives: "then let them that are in Judæa flee unto the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house; and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak." The setting up of this image in the temple will precipitate a situation from which those who are ensnared will be unable to extricate themselves. Seeing the desperate emergency that will arise at that time, our Lord urged those of His disciples who witness the setting up of the image to flee to the mountains and to escape from the country, not taking time to pack their luggage nor to take anything with them. Martial law will likely be enforced immediately and escape from the danger zone will be impossible for those who neglect the warning.

From the book of Revelation we see that the judgments of the Great Tribulation will be worldwide—at least, the seals, the last three trumpets, and the bowl judgments are scheduled to affect the whole earth whereas the first four trumpet judgments touch only one-third part of its surface; but it is evident from all the testimony of Scripture that Jerusalem and Palestine constitute the storm center of God's wrath.

Why is this? Are not the Jewish people the chosen servants of God through whom He will make known His will to the entire world? Yes, according to the Scriptures, God will yet use Israel for that purpose. To that end was she called. The Lord never abandons His plans nor His purposes, for "the gifts and the callings of God are not repented of." Why then, one insists, will God allow His judgments to fall upon the Jew in such severity as set forth in the Scriptures? The answer to this insistent question is found in the miracle which made possible the birth of Isaac. When Abraham and Sarah were past the age of parenthood, God performed this biological miracle which made possible Isaac's birth. By so doing, the Lord injected into the blood stream of the Jewish nation new life, vitality, and potentialities. These powers have lifted the Hebrew race to a plane higher than that upon which any other tribe of people live. That the Jews are a people endowed with extraordinary intelligence, insight, sensibilities, feelings, and recuperative powers is seen by the fact that this race of people has survived ordeals and conditions which would have blotted out of existence other races. No nation upon the face of the globe has suffered as Israel and has survived such horrible persecution. This fact shows, then, that new life, power, energy, vitality, potentialities were thus injected into the life-stream of this marvelous people. In giving this wonderful heritage to them the Lord intended that the Jews should be the channel through which His blessings would flow to the whole world.

With such endowments and with the blessings accruing from the revelation of God and His covenants, there has come an added responsibility to Israel: "Increased light and opportunities bring increased responsibilities." Inasmuch as she has had these superior advantages, much is expected of her. Since she has not lived up to these supernaturally bestowed benefits, the punishment that comes to her is the greater. Upon no other principle can we account for the devastating judgments and harrowing experiences through which she shall yet pass in the Great Tribulation. As has been suggested above, the first four trumpet judgments will affect only one-third of the earth whereas the seal and the bowl plagues are worldwide in their scope. I am inclined to believe that the third part of the earth upon which the first four trumpet judgments fall is that portion where the Jews are most thickly settled.

In Matthew 24:16-19 our Lord emphasized the necessity for

speedy flight from Jerusalem and environs immediately upon receipt of the news that the image is set up in the temple. In giving these instructions His heart went out to the poor, unfortunate mothers and those expecting who would, under such circumstances, be hindered from hasty and speedy flight. These warnings and exhortations, which we know are said directly to those who will be living in Palestine in the end time, are very much like those in Luke 21:21-23. In this latter passage we know from the immediate context that Christ was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. Notwithstanding the fact that the context in Luke indicates most clearly that the prediction there referred to the calamity of 70 A. D. and the further fact that the context of Matthew proves most conclusively that the end time was in view, some commentators have identified the two predictions as referring to the Jewish national overthrow of 70 A. D. Such a view is a rather hasty and superficial one. The truthfulness of this statement becomes apparent when one studies the context in which each of these passages occurs. When the facts are learned, one cannot possibly identify them and apply them to the past calamity. Without a doubt the war, siege, and final fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. was in a very limited manner a forecast of the final overthrow of Jerusalem by the armies of the world in the end time. Although this latter calamity and the sufferings attendant thereupon go far beyond anything that has been in the past, the similarity of the situations naturally calls forth language and instructions to the same effect.

#### 4. THE THOROUGHGOING NATURE OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

“And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath: for then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matt. 24: 20-22).

According to these verses, the coming Tribulation will be the greatest catastrophe of the ages. That none of the calamities which have befallen the human race can compare with this future cataclysm so far as intensity and scope are concerned is evident from the statement found in verse 21: “for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be.” Should we conceive of all the disasters of the ages as a mighty mountain range with towering peaks here and there, we would be compelled to think of the one

symbolizing the Great Tribulation as the highest and most colossal of all.

According to the verses quoted at the beginning of this section, time does not stop when this Great Tribulation has passed; on the contrary, it continues. Our Lord surveying, then, the ages of the world's history affirmed that this Great Tribulation towers above all other calamities—past and future. Since, when that tribulation passes, time still continues, our Lord affirmed that there shall never thereafter be any such catastrophe like it. In this connection let us notice (vs. 29) that, after the tribulation of those days, there will be convulsions in Nature, and then will the Son of man come in power and great glory. Hence, the last scene of the great tribulation period is brought to a close by the personal appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory upon the earth. He then takes the management of the world into His hands, stops wars, and establishes a reign of righteousness from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. Since under His régime, which will last as long as the sun and moon (Psalm 89: 34-37), there will be no more wars or catastrophes, we can see how it was that our Lord said that there would never again be any such calamity like the Great Tribulation.

The judgments of this future time of wrath will be so very intense in their nature and far-reaching in their results that, if they were allowed to last for any appreciable time, no flesh would be saved but because of Israel, whom God will yet use in a mighty way in declaring His truth to all the world, these days shall be shortened. This prediction is made in verse 22. The Lord knows the end from the beginning; hence at the psychological moment He will step upon the arena, halt the devastating judgments, restore order and peace, and establish His reign of righteousness.

#### 5. FALSE CHRISTS

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or, Here; believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead stray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold, he is in the inner chambers; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24: 23-28).

Satan always takes advantage of every situation. In the midst of the great consternation that will grip the entire world there will

arise many false prophets and christs who will actually, by the power of Satan, perform many great signs and wonders and will lead astray if possible even the elect of God. We are to understand that these supernatural portents will be genuine, Satanic miracles. Some have erroneously considered these signs as sleight-of-hand tricks. This conclusion is rather hasty. In order that we may see the force of this prediction, let us remember that, when Moses appeared to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, he was empowered by the Spirit of God to perform miracles. When he presented himself before Pharaoh and performed the appointed wonders, immediately the magicians of Egypt, energized by Satanic power, appeared upon the scene and duplicated the first two miracles wrought by Moses. Their signs were just as supernatural and as real as those performed by Moses in the energy of the Spirit of God. All the miracles, both those wrought by Moses and those by the Egyptian magicians, were genuine, supernatural manifestations of superhuman power. The power energizing Moses was that of the Holy, Eternal God, whereas that which worked through the magicians was that of the adversary of the soul—Satan.

Not only did our Lord foretell demonic machinations in the end time, but also the Apostle Paul spoke of these diabolical workings of Satan which will confirm the erroneous teachings of false prophets. To these Paul referred in 1 Timothy 4:1f. In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 2, he likewise spoke of the man of sin whose coming would be by the energy of Satan and who would perform lying wonders and signs to deceive the people.

In the midst of the Great Tribulation false prophets will arise who will declare that the Messiah has made His appearance. Some will affirm that He is in the city, whereas others will declare that He is in some secret place in the rural districts. Knowing that such deceptions will be practiced upon the people, our Lord warned His disciples against all such impostors. In order that they might not be deceived by any such wild rumors, Christ declared that His coming would be like the flashing of the lightning across the heavens as it passes from the east to the west. Thus, said He, shall be the coming of the Son of man. From the Apostle John in the book of Revelation we learn that at the visible manifestation of His coming every eye shall see Him; hence reports of the secret coming of the Lord will be pure fabrications.

Verse 28 contains a rather unusual prediction: "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." What is the significance of this passage? There are two possible explanations. In order to understand it, we must call to memory the fact that vultures or buzzards are attracted by the odors from a decaying carcase. Whenever they scent the presence of such, they immediately fly to the scene and soar in the air above the spot where the carcase lay and finally alight in order to feast upon it. This well-known fact proved to be a suitable illustration of the point which our Lord had in mind. What in the prediction corresponds to the carcase in the illustration? The answer probably is found in Deuteronomy 28:26: "And thy dead body shall be food unto all birds of the heavens, and unto the beasts of the earth; and there shall be none to frighten them away." When we read the passage in its connection we see that the body here referred to can be nothing except the body politic of the Jewish nation.

Understanding, then, that the body indicates the Jewish nation, to whom do the vultures refer? Some tell us that the passage signifies Christ. Just as the vultures soar to a body or carcase, so our Lord will return to His beloved people, Israel, and will deliver them. This interpretation is possible but it is not the necessary one. Another version explains the carcase as referring to the body politic of the Jewish nation but compares the false prophets to the vultures against whom our Lord has just given warning. Just as the buzzards devour the carcase which they find, thus will these false prophets prey upon the deluded masses of Israel in the end time and will take advantage of their credulity. This latter interpretation seems to me to fit in with the context a little better than the former one.

### III. THE REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS

The Great Tribulation will be terminated by the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ here upon the earth. When the last bowl of God's wrath has been poured out by the angel, immediately the sign of the coming of the Son of man will appear in the heavens. Then will flash forth before the startled gaze of those who have survived the tribulation the mighty glory of the returning Lord, but before this sign is seen in the heavens there will be great convulsions of nature not only among the heavenly bodies but also upon the earth. Everything will be thrown into

confusion, "for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." These great cosmic changes are described in the following passages:

"But 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 earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth 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" (Matt. 24: 29-31).

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mark 13: 24-27).

"And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21: 25-28).

#### A. *Disturbances in the Physical Realm*

"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." This statement by our Lord is no new revelation, for Isaiah predicted the same thing:

"Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh, cruel with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine" (Isa. 13: 9, 10).

A glance at the context from which these verses are taken shows that the prophet was talking of the day of the Lord, the Great Tribulation. Joel likewise spoke of the same event (Joel 2: 10).

What is meant by the sun's not giving her light? Since we are logically bound to accept every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless there is evidence in the context to indicate otherwise, we are forced to accept the statement at its face value. Therefore we may expect at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation that there will be some disturbance in the physical realm which will veil the sun and prevent its light from flood-

ing the earth. In these passages we are also told that the moon will become as blood. The prophet and the Lord, let it be observed, declared that the moon would become as blood, not blood; i. e., its appearance will be very red. At the same time the stars will withdraw their shining. In other words, they will be veiled behind something. The fulfilment of these predictions may be illustrated by the destruction of the earth as set forth in Genesis 1:2-5. The primeval order was wrecked by some great cataclysm. At that time darkness shrouded the world; hence the light from the sun, moon, and stars did not penetrate to the earth until the fourth day. Something similar, in all probability, will occur that will shut off the light from the heavenly bodies. That such will be the case is clearly set forth in Jeremiah 4:23-26. When one notices that verse 27, which is introduced by the conjunction "For," is explanatory of the vision set forth in verses 23-26 and when he realizes that the prophet was talking of the great destruction that will come to pass in the Great Tribulation (Jer. 4:27-31), he will see that this vision of a wrecked earth shrouded in darkness refers to the destruction and desolation that will be wrought during the Great Tribulation.

Further light is shed upon the great commotion that will take place at that time and the mighty changes that will be brought to pass during the Tribulation. Such information may be found in the famous passage of Isaiah 34:4: "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heaven shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig-tree." By reading the context of this verse we see that the prophet was speaking of the time of the Great Tribulation when God has indignation upon all the nations. At that time, we are told, the heavens will be dissolved and will be rolled together as a scroll. Beyond question, then, from the context we understand that Isaiah was speaking of the same cosmic changes which will take place during and at the conclusion of this period of wrath.

Additional information on these great cosmic changes is given in II Peter 3:1-13. In this famous passage the apostle tells us that in the last days mockers will come, calling in question the possibility of the fulfilment of our Lord's promise to return. The basis of their objections will be that there have been no changes in the physical earth from the days that the fathers, i. e., the apostles, fell asleep until their own time but, on the contrary, that

everything has remained on the same dead level from the apostolic days to their time as they have been from the beginning of creation. Peter informs us that the heavens and the earth which existed prior to the Flood were destroyed at the time of that disaster. That cataclysm was brought about by the Word of God, i. e., the Living Word, the Christ. The present heavens and earth are now being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. According to verse 8, Peter affirms that the Lord can fulfill a promise a thousand years after He has made it just as easily as on the day upon which He uttered it. We are not, therefore, to mistake the longsuffering of God as unfaithfulness in the fulfilment of His promise to return and to establish His great millennial reign. On the contrary, the apostle affirms that the day of the Lord will come as a thief. When that day arrives "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." When we realize that Peter is answering the mockers of the last days who reject the doctrine of our Lord's second coming, we see that he is speaking of the great destruction that will take place throughout our present solar system during the day of the Lord. As we have seen, the dissolution of the heavenly bodies here mentioned by Peter can be none other than that which was foretold by Isaiah in chapter 34:4.

In our Lord's utterance He told us that the stars would fall from heaven. How are we to interpret this language? The skies have been charted and the principal stars and constellations have been located on our great celestial maps. Because of the stability and regularity of the movement of the heavenly bodies, we know at the present time just where to find each, but in the Great Tribulation, especially toward the close of it when the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, many of these stars will fall or move from their present location in relation to the others. Such is the commonsense meaning of our Lord's prediction relative to this matter.

But, someone affirms, this language is not to be taken literally but figuratively. If he insists upon this understanding, I shall not have a controversy with him. It is altogether possible that the falling of the stars here may be phenomenal language or, as phrased otherwise, "the language of appearance." Frequently a meteor passes through our atmosphere and we immediately speak of it as a shooting star, although we know exactly what it is. It

has the appearance of a star moving very rapidly; hence we speak in the language of appearance. Some scientists think that this prediction concerning the falling of the stars will find its fulfilment in our earth's crashing into a shower of meteorites. To the observer, then, the phenomenon which he sees will appear as the falling of the stars from the heavens. Some scientists, as I have been informed, tell us that our present solar system is moving very rapidly in space and is destined to crash into a mighty shower of meteorites. Such may be the case. God, always acting on the law of parsimony, uses men and means to accomplish His purposes. It is altogether probable that the Lord, knowing the end from the beginning, has timed the movements of the heavenly bodies so that at the psychological moment when He is to punish the world for its wickedness the earth crashes into this great shower of meteorites which upsets the present cosmic order. Thus we may be certain that God synchronizes the earth's movements in relation to this shower of meteorites so that the impact may occur when the earth's cup of iniquity is full to overflowing. When the world reaches the point that God can no longer endure in love, His justice and righteousness will demand that He punish its inhabitants. Having timed all things from the beginning, at the psychological moment when the world will have plunged to the very depths of degradation, sin, and blasphemy, the earth with its cosmic order will be thrown into utter confusion. Such seems to be the plain, commonsense meaning of the language spoken by the prophet and by our Lord.

#### B. *The Sign of the Coming of the Lord*

The disciples asked our Lord for the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. Already we have seen what He designated as *the sign* of the end of the age: a world war attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places (Matt. 24: 7, 8). In verse 30, however, He referred to some specific sign which will indicate His immediate return. It is some phenomenon which occurs in the heavens and which can be seen by the inhabitants of the earth. As to what this is, no one can possibly tell, because there is no hint as to its nature. All one can say is that it will be some unusual phenomenon in the skies which will be of such a nature as to indicate to the great masses of the people that it heralds His personal return to earth. There is always congruity between the symbol or sign and the thing signified. We may therefore

conclude that it will be a symbol appropriate to indicate its import. In this connection let it be understood that this sign will not become visible until after the Great Tribulation has ended, but it will appear immediately thereafter.

### *C. The Visible Appearance of the Lord Upon the Earth*

We are told in Matthew 24:30 that all the tribes of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This event is, of course, after the Great Tribulation and must not be confused with the coming of the Lord for His saints, which subject will be discussed in the next chapter.

On the last night of our Lord's ministry prior to His arrest, He told the apostles, according to John 14:1-6, that it was necessary for Him to go away and to prepare a place for them. This being true, He assured them that He would come again and receive them unto Himself in order that they should be where He is.

According to Acts 1:6-11 Jesus led the apostles out to the Mount of Olives and from there ascended into heaven. In a final conversation the apostles asked Him if He at that time would restore the kingdom to Israel. To this query He replied that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons which the Father had placed in His own authority. What is meant by this reply? What is the significance of the expression "times and seasons"? These words can mean nothing in this context except the times and the seasons for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. His reply to this question is equivalent to an affirmation by Him that at some time He will restore the kingdom to Israel but that it was not for them to know the date. Instead of their focusing *all* of their attention upon the glorious event, they were, according to verse 8, to concern themselves with giving forth a clear, ringing testimony to the Gospel message; of course, they were to await the coming of the Holy Spirit who would endue them with power and enable them to deliver the message infallibly to the people. The program of world-evangelization is set forth in verse 8.

We are told in a very brief manner that the Lord was taken up to glory from the apostles (vss. 9, 10). As He ascended, a cloud received Him out of their sight. While they were standing gazing into heaven two angels appeared standing by their sides and said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like

manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11). This promise assures us that the Lord, at His second coming, will return with the clouds of heaven to this earth. When this promise is studied in the light of other predictions, we see that it refers to the visible coming of our Lord at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation period.

The Apostle Paul in the II Thessalonian letter spoke of the same, visible, mighty coming of the Lord Jesus:

"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure; *which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God*; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer: if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, *even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day*" (II Thess. 1: 3-10).

This quotation from Paul is an echo of that which was made by the prophet Isaiah:

"For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and his chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render his anger with fierceness, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will Jehovah execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh; and the slain of Jehovah shall be many. They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves *to go* unto the gardens, behind one in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, they shall come to an end together, saith Jehovah" (Isa. 66: 15-17).

When we examine Isaiah 66 we see that he was speaking of conditions and events which occur at the end of the Great Tribulation. This coming described in the quotation above is the visible return of the Lord in vengeance to rid the world of all the wicked and to regather Israel, as is seen in the following paragraph (vss. 8-21). Then in verses 22-24 we get a very brief glimpse of the great millennial kingdom.

A wonderful reference to the coming of the Lord in glory appears in Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen." Many other passages could be given but these suffice to show what the Lord had in mind in the quotation under consideration.

### D. *The Regathering of Israel*

“And he shall send forth 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” (Matt. 24: 31).

This passage must be viewed from the proper perspective—namely, from the Old Testament point of view. In fact, a condensed statement of Isaiah 66: 15-21, to which we have just given attention, is set forth here in Matthew 24: 31, only it appears here in the language of our Lord in an abridged form.

There is some discussion as to the significance of “elect” in this passage. This word, when used by the apostles after the establishment of the church, refers to the Christians or the Church of Jesus Christ. But when our Lord uttered His prediction, what was its significance? Since it was used in Jewish theology at the time to refer to the Chosen People, we must accept this connotation as its significance unless there is positive evidence to the contrary. We will seek in vain for such testimony; therefore the probability is that here, as in the literature of the day, it refers to the Jewish people. Hence the regathering mentioned in verse 31 is but the restoration of Israel foretold by the prophets and the establishment of the kingdom to Israel which increases until it encircles the globe.

That the throne of David will be established, that the Messiah will be seated upon it, and that His government will increase until it includes all nations is evident from Isaiah 9: 6, 7:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.”

I wish the reader to notice especially the statement, “Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever.” This passage teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ who is foretold in verse 6 and who is called “Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” will reestablish the throne of David and will take the government of Judah into His own hands. Then it will increase until it encircles the globe. Since, however, this subject will be taken up under the examina-

tion of Matthew 25 : 31-46, I will desist from a discussion of it at this time.

The only point to be considered in this connection is the regathering of Israel. By all scholars who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, Isaiah 11 is recognized as a pure Messianic oracle. In verses 6-10 the prophet describes the glorious conditions which will exist when Messiah is reigning upon the throne of David. Verses 11 and 12 foretell the regathering of the outcasts of Israel at the time of which he is speaking :

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, that shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

I wish the reader to note especially the statement “that the Lord will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people. . . .” The mention of a second restoration implies a first. What of these two restorations and when do they occur? According to Biblical history, the first took place when the Lord permitted those Jews in captivity who longed for the homeland to return to the place of their nativity under Zerubbabel after the seventy years of Babylonian exile. Some have tried to see in this passage a reference to Israel’s coming out of the land of Egypt. That event, miraculous as it was, could in no wise be called a restoration. One cannot be restored to a place or position which he has never occupied. When Israel left Egypt for Canaan she had never been there; hence in no sense could the deliverance from Egypt be called a restoration. The only thing that could possibly be called the first return was that which occurred under Zerubbabel after the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. The second regathering of Israel here foretold is spoken of in connection with our Lord’s judging the world and purging it of the wicked. This prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. When it is, the Lord will gather His people from the four corners of the earth.

The restoration under Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest was typical of the final regathering of all Israel in the end time. Because of the typical relationship which the restoration under Zerubbabel sustained to the final one, the description of the two blends in such passages as Jeremiah 29 : 10-14. One must read these verses carefully in order to see where the one prediction ends and the other begins. May I again ask the reader’s permis-

sion to use the illustration which I constantly employ in order to set forth what is usually termed by Bible students as the double or manifold fulfilment of prophecy? Frequently a picture is thrown upon the screen by the stereopticon. As the audience gazes upon it, it begins to fade and at the same time there appear the dim outlines of another. By the time the first has disappeared the second is in full view. Such is a perfect illustration of the verses to which I have just referred the reader.

Jeremiah in 23: 5-8 gives a vivid picture of King Messiah's reign over the houses of Judah and Israel and of the final glorious restoration of the nation to its own land:

"Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them. And they shall dwell in their own land."

This prediction of Israel's return to the homeland has never been fulfilled. Since God will redeem every promise, we may be certain that He will make this one good. Under Zerubbabel approximately fifty thousand of the Jews who had a longing for the native land returned. There were no miraculous interventions and supernatural wonders performed that did eclipse in glory the divine interposition performed at the time of the exodus; hence we may be certain that the restoration under Zerubbabel was not the one which Jeremiah foretold, since he informed us in this prophecy that the restoration of which he was speaking will be far more glorious and greater than the exodus from Egypt so that the latter pales off into insignificance in comparison with this final regathering. Therefore we know that this prediction awaits fulfilment. There are many prophecies of Israel's regathering but these suffice to show the literalness of this glorious future event.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

**I**N TIMES of crises the rapture of the church has been the hope of the saints throughout the centuries. When disappointments, sorrows, and disasters come upon men and women and all earthly prospects are swept away from under their feet, instinctively they look to the Lord for deliverance. Is this hope a figment of the imagination, or is it based upon a factual foundation?

Someone has well said that every fundamental principle and doctrine set forth in the Scriptures are to be discovered, in their embryonic form at least, in the book of Genesis. Are there traces, then, of this glorious hope to be found in this Book of Beginnings? Yes, in the case of Enoch:

“And Enoch lived sixty and five years and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Gen. 5: 21-24).

Enoch was the seventh in the theocratic line from Adam. He did not float with the times but rather stemmed the tide and battled victoriously for the Lord. God always has His men, a faithful remnant, who will be true to Him and who will oppose the wrong in order to be loyal and faithful to Him. Such was Enoch. He “walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” By *faith* he walked with God. He simply trusted the Lord and took Him at His word. This unswerving confidence determined his policy in life relative to all matters. Doubtless many of his contemporaries thought him a crank or a fool because he did not live and act as they did. The farther he walked the pathway of life with God the clearer the way became unto the perfect day. Finally when he had completed his work here below, he disappeared mysteriously from his earthly environment. Doubtless many of his neighbors and friends sought for him but found him not, “for God took him.”

Enoch's experience doubtless has a typical significance and indicates that at the psychological moment, when God has completed the work which He has for His church to accomplish, suddenly and mysteriously will she disappear from this wicked world. This

teaching is set forth very clearly in the New Testament to which we shall presently proceed.

Elijah was another who was translated and did not see death but was taken up to God in a mysterious, miraculous manner. The prophet's experience shows conclusively that it is not necessary that men die, as we are frequently told: "Death is a debt all must pay." While death is the common lot of the human race, yet these two men of God were exempted. There will be other exceptions in the case of all the people of God who are alive at the coming of the Lord for His people when He descends from heaven to the air to raise the dead in Christ and to catch up the living saints (I Thess. 4: 13-18). With these preliminary remarks based upon two cases of translation found in the Old Testament, we are now ready to begin an investigation of our Lord's language in the Olivet discourse on this subject.

### I. THE PROMISE

"Now from the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, *even* at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24: 32-36). "And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Luke 21: 29-33).

The text found in Luke just quoted differs somewhat from that given by Matthew. A close examination of these two passages shows that each writer was viewing the situation from a little different angle; nevertheless the similarities are so very great that it is evident both were recording the same prediction. We are to understand these records not as contradictory but as supplemental. In Matthew's statement the personal coming of our Lord for His saints is emphasized, whereas Luke is especially interested in the manifestation of the kingdom of God upon the earth. These differing aspects of the same prediction might be illustrated by the following example: I may hold up a piece of money between another person and myself and ask him to inform me what he sees on it. Then I explain what I see. He, looking at one side, describes accurately that which is embossed upon his side of the

coin whereas I as truthful as he narrate what appears on my side. Both are looking at the same coin but viewing it from different angles. Hence our truthful statements naturally differ. This little illustration shows how statements relative to the same object may vary greatly. The similarities identify the object described but the dissimilarities prove different points of view. There can be no doubt in the mind of the faithful believer that every word which is spoken by Matthew and Luke was uttered by the Lord. Neither account purports to be an exhaustive, verbatim record of all that was said on this occasion or at any other time. With these preliminary remarks we are now prepared to analyze both passages and to arrive at the correct teaching set forth therein.

#### A. *Analysis of Matthew 24: 32-36*

“Now from the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.” Are we to understand that Jesus was referring to a literal fig tree or did He have a figurative or symbolic significance in mind? Some earnest students affirm that we are to understand this passage symbolically, whereas others just as earnest and as loyal to God insist that the fig tree is to be taken literally. In view of this controversy it becomes necessary again that I call attention to the fundamental principle of interpreting all language—namely, that each word is to be taken at its primary, ordinary, usual significance unless there is warrant in the context justifying a departure from the literal meaning and demanding a figurative one. We search in vain for evidence demanding a departure from the normal, natural meaning of the words; therefore being guided by this fundamental principle of interpretation I understand the fig tree to refer to the literal plant.

But does not the fig tree, one asks, signify Israel? Is it not a symbol of the Jewish nation? In such a passage as Joel 1:7 it does have this figurative or symbolic significance. In order to see this fact one must study the entire context in Joel 1. In view of this passage there can be no doubt that the fig tree was a symbol of the Jewish nation and was used thus on certain occasions. This position cannot be doubted. The question which we must decide at this point is whether or not it has a symbolic meaning in this passage. As stated above, we are never warranted in departing from the literal meaning of any passage unless the context justifies such a procedure. Vain is the search in this instance for such

evidence; therefore, I understand that the fig tree here is used in the literal sense of the word.

As I understand the passage, Jesus simply called the disciples' attention to an illustration in the vegetable kingdom. Whenever the people saw the fig tree budding, they could know assuredly that spring was near. We should remember that the people in Palestine of our Lord's day did not have the advantage of several calendars on the walls of their houses as we do. They could tell that the winter was breaking and the spring approaching by the budding of the trees. The force of this illustration was impressed upon my mind in February, 1934. I spent the month of January in Winnipeg, Canada. The day on which I arrived, the thermometer registered six degrees below zero, and on the day of my departure the mercury fell to thirty-five below, with a strong, cold, wind blowing. Two days later I stepped off the train in Vancouver, British Columbia. In this city the trees were beginning to bud. Though only a two days journey separated me from the rigors of the icy, windy Manitoba winter weather, I knew that spring had come on the Pacific Northwest Coast. I did not need to ask anyone. The evidence of it was before my eyes. Such is the force of our Lord's statement with reference to the fig tree. As one can tell by the budding of the fig tree that summer is nigh, so, declared our Lord, "ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, *even* at the doors."

The question arising at this juncture of our investigation is: What is meant by the expression, "all these things"? The answer is to be found in verse 8: "But all these things are the beginning of travail." We have already seen that the things referred to in verse 8 are explained in verse 7—namely, a world-war, famine, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places. These four things occurring at the same time constitute the sign of the end of the age and are the first birth-pain, the warning pain that indicates to the world that the time for it to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God is close at hand. Since our Lord was answering the apostles' question concerning the sign of His coming and of the end of the age, and since He mentioned these four things and said that they are the first birth-pain, and since in verse 33 He said "when ye see all these things," we can draw but one conclusion—namely, that the expression, "all these things," in this verse refers to the things mentioned in verses 7 and 8.

Since "all these things" of verse 8 constitute the sign of the end of the age, which naturally precedes that great event, and since "all these things" of verse 33 refer to the same events, we see that verses 32 and 33 take our thoughts back from the millennial age, described in verse 31, to the time prior to the world-war, famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places. A recognition of this fact shows us that our Lord employed "the law of recurrence" on this occasion. To emphasize the force of this statement let us take a review—another view of the whole discourse. Verse 6, as we have already seen, covers the entire Christian dispensation. Verses 7 and 8 give us the sign of the end of the age, the first birth-pain. Verses 9-14 give us a rapid survey of the spiritual and moral conditions that obtain during the Great Tribulation. Our Lord in verses 15-28 employed "the law of recurrence" and gave us another view of the Great Tribulation period, laying emphasis upon the immediate cause, its horrors and sufferings, and the false christs who will prey upon the credulity of the people. In verses 29-31 He described the phenomena in the natural world, both terrestrial and celestial, with which the age terminates and concluded the verses with a prediction of His personal coming and His establishing the glorious millennial kingdom upon the earth. Then in verses 32 and 33, by calling attention to the "all these things" mentioned in verses 7 and 8, He took the apostles' mind from the millennial age back to the time immediately preceding the sign of the end—"the world-war, famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places." As stated before, if the world-war which broke out in 1914, together with its unprecedented famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places was the calamity to which our Lord referred, then verses 32 and 33 are directed especially to the generation living in 1914—the generation witnessing the outbreak of that world-cataclysm. Again, let me repeat that I am strongly inclined to believe that the upheaval of 1914-1918 with its attending calamities was the fulfilment of this prediction, though I will not be dogmatic on this point. It behooves each of us to have an open mind and to investigate any fresh evidence that the Lord may see fit to bring to us.

#### B. *Analysis of Luke 21: 29-33*

"And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh. Verily I say unto you, This

generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

In this passage, parallel to the one which we have just studied, our Lord called the disciples' attention not only to the fig tree but to all the trees. Can it be possible that the fig tree here symbolizes the Jewish nation? Let us assume that such is its meaning. In that case the other trees would indicate the rest of the nations. According to this theory, Israel is without national life during the present time. When she begins to show signs of political revival, then is the kingdom of God near. Since the hypothesis assumes national death on the part of Israel, the other trees likewise must signify a similar condition among the nations. Is such true to facts? Everyone knows that it is not; therefore we must assume that Jesus used the fig tree and all the other trees in a literal sense. As stated above, He drew His illustration from the natural realm with which the disciples were familiar.

In the Matthew passage the apostle emphasized the personal return of the Lord as being near whenever the disciples should observe a world war, famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes occurring simultaneously. In Luke's record, however, the kingdom of God is used instead of the personal return of the Lord. Both statements are true. When the Lord returns in power and glory He will set up His kingdom, the kingdom foretold in the Old Testament which is none other than the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, which will increase until it includes all nations. With the exception of these two points, Luke's record is parallel with that of Matthew; hence there is no further need of a definition of terms.

### C. *Synthesis of the Prediction*

Having studied the two passages and having ascertained the meaning of the specific terms, we are now ready to gather all of our data together and to set forth the teaching in a plain statement.

By calling attention to "all these things" our Lord carried the minds of the apostles back to the time antedating the world-war, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and, in substance, said, "whenever you see such a colossal catastrophe, then you can know that My return is close at hand." Its nearness may be illustrated by one's standing at the doors. Being in that position he can open the door and enter at any time. Thus our Lord said that the generation which witnesses a world-war should be looking momentarily for His return. To be more specific with reference to the

nearness, He declared "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished." The question arising at this point is: What is meant by "This generation"? In view of the trend of thought and the illustration which He had just used, we are driven to the inevitable conclusion that the generation here mentioned is the one that witnesses the first birth-pain, the generation that sees "all these things"—"when ye see all of these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors." The people who are alive and who are old enough when the trees begin to bud in the spring can draw the conclusion that summer is near. In the same manner those people who are living and old enough to understand prophecy and then to observe correctly that what is transpiring in their day is the fulfilment of the prediction can know that His coming is near, even at the doors. Hence Jesus meant by "This generation\*" the people who would be living at the time of "the first birth-pain," and who would be old enough to recognize in the current events the fulfilment of the prediction. This interpretation is demanded by the comparison which He used.

Does a generation mean a period of thirty to thirty-five years? Such is one of its meanings today but that by no means is its only definition. We must select that one which accords with the facts of the context and the comparison here instituted. I believe that the person with average intelligence who was, say, between twenty and twenty-five years of age when the world-war broke out, could look at the prediction in an impartial manner and could recognize in that catastrophe the one foretold by Jesus, or at least an approximation to it. It does not take a person with a super-intellect to grasp the language of our Lord. The one prerequisite to a proper understanding of this passage is that one have a mind to receive any and everything that God has said and to search the Scriptures diligently and scientifically. One who has reached the age of maturity can certainly do this; therefore, in my judgment, I would say that the generation which had reached the age of maturity in 1914 (if that be the conflict foretold by our Lord), would be the

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\* Sometimes we hear the position that "This generation" means the Jewish race. Lexical authority is given to support the contention. I freely admit that the Greek word translated *generation* may mean *race of people*. It has several meanings but we must select that definition of a word which accords with all of the facts of a context as the meaning intended in a given place. If we supply "This Jewish race" in this passage, the comparison loses its force; therefore this interpretation cannot be accepted as the genuine one. In my judgment the one suggested in the text above is the only one which will accord with all the facts of the context.

generation here mentioned. Considering these people as normal we can say that there will be those of that generation who will live sixty years or even seventy after that conflict broke out. Thus our Lord gave us the assurance that within the lifetime of the generation living at the time of the first birth-pain "all these things" which He had mentioned would come to pass.

The expression, "all these things," of verse 34, has a broader significance than it does in verse 33. I have already showed that in verse 33 it referred definitely to things mentioned in verses 7 and 8, which constitute the sign of the closing age or the first birth-pain. Its meaning in verse 34, comprehends all of the things mentioned in the discourse up to this point. Otherwise construed, it has no meaning. From what we have already learned, the prediction not only includes the Great Tribulation but the personal return of our Lord at the conclusion of the period and His establishing the kingdom of God upon the earth. Therefore, if the major conflict of 1914-1918 is the thing referred to by our Lord in this passage, we may be certain that all of the things mentioned in the prediction will occur within the lifetime of the generation that was old enough to recognize in the world-war the sign of the closing age.

If the late war attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places, one may ask, was a world-war and if we are to accept the statements in Revelation 6 and 16 as predictions of two subsequent world-struggles, which of these three wars are we to understand is *the sign* of the end of the age? In other words, if the Bible foretells a series of world-wars, how are we to tell which one of this series is the one to be understood as the first birth-pain? This question is a very pertinent one and deserves full consideration. Though I previously touched upon this point and employed the illustration of the telephone posts to set the facts forth, the importance of this subject justifies my repeating it. Let the reader assume that I live in a rural district on a highway and that he is coming to visit me. Upon meeting a person, he inquires the distance to my place and receives the following information: "Note that on the left side of the road there is a telephone line with the wires attached immediately to the posts. Pay no attention to them until you see a post with a crossarm. Directly across from it is Cooper's gate." The reader drives several miles before sighting the post with the crossarm. Beyond this one he notices that all the posts have crossarms. Opposite

which one would he expect to find my gate? Immediately common sense answers "the first one." This reply is the only sensible one. Since the Bible foretells a series of world-conflicts and since our Lord designated such a one attended by famines, pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places as the sign of the end of the age, one would naturally conclude that, when the first one transpires, we are to understand that it is the sign of the closing age. In view of this fact I am strongly inclined to believe that the conflict of 1914-1918 was the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction.

#### D. *Corroborative Evidence from Parallel Promises*

"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thess. 4: 13-18).

In this passage Paul speaks of the rapture of the church and informs us that the Lord will "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" and at that time the dead in Christ will rise first, followed by the catching up of the living saints in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Here occurs a definite promise of the rapture when the Lord descends from heaven to the air. It is to be noted in this passage that the Lord will not come all the way to the earth but that the saints, risen and translated, will meet Him in the air. The same hope is set forth in I Corinthians 15: 50-58:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."

According to verse 50, men in their natural bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Though we are at the present time in the spiritual kingdom of God (Col. 1:13), we cannot inherit what is here termed "the kingdom of God," i. e., the kingdom that will be revealed at the second coming of our Lord. To the Roman church Paul spoke of Christians' being in the kingdom of God (14:16). Other passages present the same thought. That the saved are during this dispensation in the kingdom of God is beyond dispute. But the kingdom in which we now are is not the only phase of God's rule and government. Paul taught his young converts, who undoubtedly were in the kingdom, "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Peter urged Christians to give all diligence in supplying in their faith the Christian graces and assured them of the blessed promise: "for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:11). These and many other passages speak of the kingdom of God which will be established when Jesus returns. It is this kingdom which cannot be inherited by men in the mortal state. In this great passage which we are now studying Paul told how men will be transformed so that they may enter it.

In verse 51 he said: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed." A mystery is not something that is intangible or incomprehensible but simply that which has not been made known. After it has been declared it ceases to be a mystery but is a revelation. There are several mysteries referred to in the New Testament but the one which he had in mind here is: "We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed." Frequently we hear people say that death is a debt which all must pay. Such doctrine is contrary to the teaching of the Apostle Paul here, for "sleep" is the Scriptural term for dying.

Instead of our dying, declared Paul, "we shall all be changed." This statement was made to the church at Corinth directly "with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their *Lord* and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2). When one recognizes the character of the church at Corinth—how carnal it was and how many errors and sinful practices were being carried on with official approval, and when he notes the statement "we shall all be changed," he realizes as never before the abounding grace of God. The Lord does not put a premium upon sinfulness; neither am I making any apologies for the same. I am, however, trying to look

the facts in the face. To this church at Corinth which he called "carnal," Paul by the Spirit declared that "we shall all be changed." From this statement I conclude that every regenerated, born again child of God will be caught up at the time of our Lord's coming and of the translation of the saints.

That the rapture mentioned in the Thessalonian and Corinthian letters we have just studied occurs at the time of our Lord's coming, promised in Matthew 24: 32-36, will become more abundantly evident when we study the next section of this passage to which we will now go rapidly.

## II. THE TIME

"And as *were* the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women *shall be* grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left" (Matt. 24: 37-41).

We have just seen in verses 32-36 that our Lord's coming is *after* the first birth-pain occurs. In the Scripture which I have just quoted we shall learn of the conditions which will obtain at the time of His coming for His saints.

### A. *Analysis of the Prediction*

According to verse 37, the days of Noah are analogous to the days of the coming of the Son of man. In verse 38, however, Jesus explained more fully what He meant and what days of Noah are parallel to those of the coming of the Son of man. "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking. . . ." We are to bear in mind that the Lord does not draw an analogy between all the days of Noah and all of the days of the coming of the Son of man. He confined His comparison to those days which were *before* the flood and those days of the coming of the Son of man which are *before* the terrible catastrophe of the Great Tribulation. This interpretation is demanded by necessary inference. In Noah's day, prior to the coming of the flood, the population of the world was busily engaged in eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and in all the commercial pursuits and pleasures of the day "until the day that Noah entered into the dark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man." In the

comparison here used, the days before the flood answer to the days before the Tribulation, and the flood disaster corresponds to the Great Tribulation judgments. The ante-diluvians were unaware of the disaster threatening them and never realized what the future had in store for them until the judgment came in the form of the flood. Thus shall it be at the time of the outbreak of the Great Tribulation. The days immediately preceding this future outpouring of God's wrath are called, the period of "the coming of the Son of man."

"Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left."

This quotation indicates that there will be a separation of the people living in the days immediately preceding the Great Tribulation. By our Lord's saying that two men will be in the field, one will be taken and the other left, He does not imply that half of the people will be taken and the other half left. The dominant idea is that the one who is a child of God will be taken, whereas the one who has never made his peace with the Lord will be left to pass into the Great Tribulation. Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount that the way to eternal life is very narrow, and few, comparatively speaking, walk therein, whereas the road to everlasting destruction is very broad and wide. Hence the teaching of these verses just quoted must be construed in the light of our Lord's other positive teaching.

### B. *Synthesis of the Passage*

The section of Scripture which we have been studying simply teaches that the world will continue to grow more wicked as the end is approached. There will develop a duplication of the days prior to the flood. Indifference to God and His service and a corresponding increase of worldliness and pleasure-seeking will be the order of the day. As in the case of the flood, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man which immediately precede the Great Tribulation. Those who are faithful to God and who know Him will be taken out of the world, whereas the rest of the people will be left to pass through the horrors of the Tribulation.

Some have seen in this block of Scripture a reference to the Jewish people and not the rapture of the church. The basis for this contention is that Matthew 24 and 25 are purely Jewish in their outlook. This supposition is supported by the general propo-

sition that the entire book of Matthew is purely Jewish. In regard to this position let me say that as I understand the situation, Matthew presents our Lord as King of the Jews; hence in painting this portrait he of necessity had to select those materials and incidences, together with utterances from the Lord's lips that would present Him as King of the Jews. All of this is freely admitted. At the same time it is impossible for one to admit a purely Jewish aspect of the Olivet discourse. While Jerusalem and Palestine occupy the central position on the stage of this prediction, they by no means monopolize all of our attention. We have already seen that the background to this discourse is Zechariah 14 and parallel passages, which have a world outlook. In view of this fact it is impossible for us to accept the dictum that the Olivet discourse is purely Jewish. No one would say that the Tribulation is purely Jewish. While it is designated by the prophet Jeremiah as "the time of Jacob's trouble," it is a time of judgment upon all the nations. The reason for this special designation is that at that time the Lord will punish Israel doubly for all her sins because she has enjoyed such inheritance and blessings as no other peoples upon the face of the globe. In view of all these facts we must say that, although in the Olivet discourse Jerusalem and Palestine occupy the central position in the prediction, the outlook is world-wide; therefore this reference to the taking out of one and the leaving of the other cannot be applied to the separation of the Jewish people at the end of the Tribulation. In fact, as we have already seen, verses 32f are spoken to those who witness the first birth-pain; hence it is given to those who are living prior to the Great Tribulation. Since it was spoken to the Lord's disciples, the language under consideration can refer to none other than to His disciples in contradistinction to the men of the world. Those being taken are the Christians who are caught up to be with the Lord, and those left, the unsaved who will remain upon the earth to go through the Great Tribulation.

### C. *Corroborative Evidence from Parallel Passages*

In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 appears the record of the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven in the air to raise the dead in Christ and to catch up the living saints to be with Him. Without doubt this prediction is a reference to the rapture of the church. When that event occurs, the church will meet her Lord in the air and will ever be with Him. Wherever He goes she accompanies Him.

In 5:1 the apostle declares, "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you." Because of the unfortunate chapter division here, we usually lose sight of the continuity of the thought. "The times and the seasons" of what? The only possible answer is, the times and the seasons of the event discussed in the preceding verses—namely, the Rapture. When we remember that the chapter and verse divisions were made by men and when we follow the development of the thought as given by the inspired apostle, we see that in chapter 5 he is still discussing the matter of the translation of the church and begins chapter 5 with a discussion of the time when that event will occur. The force of this argument may be illustrated by this same idiom in Acts 1:6, 7: "They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority." The apostles asked the Lord if He were going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that time. In reply He declared that it was not for them to know "times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority." The "times or seasons" of what? The context answers: the times or seasons of restoring the kingdom to Israel as foretold by Micah 4:1-8. "The times and the seasons" mentioned by Paul can, therefore, mean only the times and the seasons of the Rapture.

In discussing the times and the seasons of the Rapture, the apostle explained the matter more fully in verses 2 and 3:

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape."

From his statements relative to the seemingly peaceful and prosperous period prior to the day of the Lord in connection with the times and the seasons of the Rapture, it is evident that the apostle was speaking of the translation of the church which immediately precedes the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord here mentioned is none other than the Great Tribulation which is thus designated in the *Old Testament* in various passages. In his discussion of these topics, the apostle contrasted the Christians whom he called "sons of light" with the people of the world, who are the "sons of darkness." Likewise he placed the Christian walk and

manner of life over against those of the world. Finally in verses 8-11 he gave a most needy exhortation to the children of God.

Let us listen very carefully to the positive note which is sounded in the beginning of verse 8:

"But let us since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

In order that there might be no mistake about the question as to whether or not the Christians enter the Tribulation, the apostle stated the situation first negatively and then positively: "For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation. . . ." The word, "wrath," here can refer to nothing else except the day of the Lord which is thus designated in the Old Testament and which is referred to here in verse 2. In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, after having stated the case in the negative he declared his position in the affirmative manner: "but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." He was speaking to people who were already saved and yet he said that they are appointed unto salvation. How could saved people be appointed unto salvation? The fundamental idea of the word, "salvation," is deliverance. He affirmed that we are not appointed unto or into this wrath but unto salvation; therefore the word can have but one meaning—namely, that Christians will not enter the period of wrath. How will they be delivered or saved from this wrath? The remaining part of the sentence gives us the desired information: "through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." These words have the same import as the promise in 4: 16, 17 concerning the raising of the dead in Christ, the catching up of the living saints, and the translation of their bodies at the time of the Lord's descent from heaven to the air. From this study of the subject in the fourth and fifth chapters of I Thessalonians we see that the Apostle Paul placed the rapture of the church prior to the pouring out of God's wrath.

This position is likewise confirmed by his statement found in I Thessalonians 1:9, 10:

"For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come."

Attention is sometimes called to the fact that *ek* is used in the expression, "Jesus, who delivereth us from the wratch to come." The primary meaning of this Greek preposition is "out of." Some brethren assume that the church will go into the Tribulation but will be protected while they pass through it. In other words, the church will be in the midst of God's wrath but will be preserved from its evil effects by supernatural power. This position has been illustrated by the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. They were in that inferno but the heat and the flames did not injure them. Will this passage permit such an interpretation? Before we can decide definitely we must get the exact meaning of the preposition. On this point I wish to quote from the late Dr. A. T. Robertson:

"But *apo* needs to be compared more particularly with *ek* which it finally displaced save in the Epirot *ach* or *och*. But the two never are exactly equivalent. *Ek* means "from within" while *apo* is merely the general starting point. *Apo* does not deny the "within-ness"; it simply does not assert it as *ek* does" (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*).

From this statement of Dr. Robertson's we see that the primary meaning of *ek* is "out of." Nevertheless in a number of places this very preposition is used interchangeably with *apo*. For instance, in I Thessalonians 2:6 we have such an example. Whenever *ek* is used, we are to assume that it has the primary meaning of "out of" unless the facts of the context preclude this inherent meaning. From this sound, fundamental, grammatical, and lexicographical law there can be no escape. Since, however, we have seen from this letter (2:6) that they may be used interchangeably, we must examine the context and the facts of each case to determine whether we are to understand it with the primary or a secondary meaning.

In the discussion of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 I proved that the subject there examined was the rapture of the church and that God has not appointed His children unto wrath but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. This passage demonstrates the fact that Christians will not enter that period of wrath or be subjected to it, but that, on the contrary, they are to be delivered from it. This teaching stated both negatively and positively is so very clear that it is impossible for one to understand that the church will enter the Tribulation. According to this Scripture, the church will be delivered out of the world prior to the Tribulation. This statement being true, we must

interpret Paul's language in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10 in harmony with this plain, unmistakable conclusion, for he would not in the first chapter affirm that the church is going into the Tribulation and will be preserved from harm during that time and then in chapters 4 and 5 declare that the Lord will take her out of the world at the rapture before the pouring out of the wrath.

#### D. *Negative Evidence Examined*

Sometimes our attention is called to the fact that the rapture, according to 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, is to be "at the last trump." The trump here referred to is said to be, by those believing the church goes through the Tribulation, the seventh trumpet judgment of the book of Revelation. Usually by those taking this position the seal, the trumpet, and the bowl judgments (Rev. 6, 8, 9, 16) are said to be different descriptions or representations of the one series of divine visitations which will run through the entire Tribulation. Thus, according to this theory, the seals cover the entire Tribulation. Then the trumpet judgments describe the same events under a different representation. Hence the seventh trumpet, or the last judgment, comes at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. Since Paul in his statement to the Corinthians declared that the rapture of the church will be at the last trump, those espousing this position affirm that the saints will go into the Tribulation and will be caught up out of the world only at the conclusion of it.

This method of reasoning may seem to some to be satisfying and conclusive, but, when the facts in the case are learned, it is seen to be very superficial. According to the best scholarship, Paul wrote the Corinthian letter about 56 A. D. The book of Revelation, by John, was penned in 96 A. D., about forty years later. This book claims to be a revelation or an uncovering—the disclosure of that which had never been made known before. Since the trumpet judgments of Revelation had never been disclosed prior to 96 A. D. and since Paul's statement in the Corinthian letter was penned in 56 A. D., it is impossible for us to see how Paul could use the expression "the last trump" referring to something that had never been revealed, not even to himself, and expect the church at Corinth to understand what he meant. In view of these facts it is impossible for this interpretation to stand.

Another objection sometimes urged against the pre-tribulation

rapture of the saints is based upon the mention of a trumpet in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27:

"And he shall send forth 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."

"And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."

It is assumed that the trumpet here referred to is the one mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the Thessalonian and Corinthian letters. Attention is called to the last phrase of the Matthew passage—"from one end of heaven to the other." The argument is also buttressed by the last phrase in the Mark passage—"from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." From these two phrases the conclusion is drawn that our Lord was speaking of the gathering together of the departed saints in the heavens and those remaining upon the earth; hence some students affirm that the rapture is in Matthew 24:31 clearly indicated as occurring at the time when our Lord reveals Himself in glory at the conclusion of the Tribulation.

At first this reasoning sounds indeed forceful but upon further investigation it is seen to be very fallacious. Already we have seen that our Lord during the Olivet discourse was thinking in terms of the Old Testament. His choice of phraseology, illustrations, and expressions was largely determined by its language. This statement being true, we must attach the significance to these phrases and expressions which is found in the Old Testament unless there is positive evidence pointing in an opposite direction. This principle cannot be questioned. What was the significance of these expressions in the Old Testament? The following passage will answer:

"For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Jehovah your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that Jehovah he is God; there is none else besides him" (Deut. 4: 32-35).

In verses 30 and 31 of this chapter Moses foretold Israel's return to the Lord in the days of her tribulation—in the latter time.

God will then be merciful to her and will remember His covenant with her. This quotation begins by Moses' challenging the nation to investigate the history of the race—from creation—and to inquire from the peoples of the earth whether there had been any such supernatural phenomenon as that manifested by the Lord in His bringing Israel out of Egypt. In requesting her to make this investigation for a parallel to their deliverance, Moses used the expression "and from the one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?" The fact that he urged them to ask "from the one end of heaven unto the other" shows that he employed that expression to refer to the nations, because they could not inquire of anyone except the people here upon the earth. This phraseology is an echo of the ancient cosmology held by primitive peoples. The earth was conceived of as being flat and the heavens as being a dome with small holes, the stars, through which the light from the sun beamed. Thus the dome of heaven was supposed to touch the earth on the outskirts of civilization. Therefore the common language was from one end of heaven unto the other. This expression indicated just what our current phrase, worldwide, means. Let us remember in this connection that we constantly use phenomenal language such as "the sun rises and sets." Nevertheless we do not believe that the sun actually rises or sets. We understand the real nature of the earth and its movements with relation to sun, moon, and stars; yet we still speak in the language of primitive peoples. In Deuteronomy 28:64 Moses foretold Israel's being dispersed among the nations, "from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." Thus in these two passages occur the expressions "from one end of heaven unto the other end of heaven" and "from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth"; yet both of them refer to this earth and have, according to their context, no reference to the heavens as we understand them today.

Since such was the significance of these terms and since our Lord's phraseology was determined to a large extent by the Old Testament language and current usage, we must not import into His statements, especially these idioms, a meaning foreign to that of the Old Testament unless there is positive evidence demanding such a connotation. Since there is none in the Olivet discourse and since the "elect" in this sermon refers primarily to Israel, and since according to prophetic prediction Israel is to be

gathered from the four corners of the globe to Palestine at the coming of our Lord to the earth to establish His millennial reign, we are forced to the conclusion that in the verses under consideration Jesus was foretelling the fulfilment of the Old Testament predictions relative to Israel's regathering.

Other evidence for a post-tribulation rapture is sought in different passages of Scripture, but, when the facts of the context are examined, we see that there is no support for this theory.

### III. THE NECESSITY OF WATCHFULNESS

"Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24: 42-44).

#### A. *Because of the Imminence of the Rapture*

Watchfulness on the part of the disciples of Christ is urged upon the basis, "for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh." This same exhortation is found in verse 44: "for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." That in these statements our Lord was not talking about His coming at the end of the Tribulation is evident from the fact that we know exactly when that coming will occur. The Great Tribulation begins in the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel and continues for three and a half years. People living at the time when the image is set up in the temple can count and know the very time—three and a half years later—when the Lord will come. Hence concerning that coming it cannot be said that "ye know not the day nor the hour." God is accurate in timing events. Note the precision of the statement concerning Israel's leaving Egypt: "And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass" etc. The Lord will be just as punctual in coming in fulfilment of His promise at the end of the three and one half years of tribulation as He was in bringing Israel out of Egypt. Hence the people in the Tribulation will know the time of His manifestation. Since our Lord said that this coming of which He was speaking in verses 32-34 was unknown to the disciples, it is evident that He was not talking about the glorious appearing at the conclusion of the Tribulation but the rapture.

The coming of Christ for His saints and the rapture of the church is an imminent event. By the word *imminent* I mean that

it is an ever-present possibility. Such is the attitude that all people who witness "the first birth-pain" should take toward their Lord's coming for them.

The Apostle John in his first epistle declared that: "every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 Jno. 3:3). Whenever one realizes that the Lord's coming is an ever-present possibility, he will so order his life and deport himself in such a way as to honor and glorify the Lord Jesus and to advance His cause among men. He will by the power of the Spirit of God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ purify himself, even as He is pure. In view of the cleansing, sanctifying effect that the blessed hope of His return has upon one, our Lord urged the necessity of watchfulness.

#### B. *Because of the Deceitfulness of Sin*

"But take heed to yourselves, lest happily your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare; for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:34-36).

Sin is very deceitful. Before one can realize it, Satan has him in his clutches. Habits are formed very quickly. The allurements of the world are very enticing; the cares of life press upon one with irresistible force and crowd out the spiritual life and interests if he is not very watchful. Knowing all of these things, our Lord enjoined upon His disciples to avoid the cares of this life, to be watchful at every season, and to pray that they may escape all of these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of man. Such seems to be the significance of our Lord's exhortation in the verses given above.

Some have, however, concluded that the exhortation to watch and to pray that the disciples may escape the things coming upon the world (Luke 21:34-36) is equivalent to a declaration that, if they do not watch and pray, the day of the Lord will overtake them and they will have to pass through the Great Tribulation. Such is a possible inference but not a necessary one. Man co-operates with God. By prayer man enables God, humanly speaking, to accomplish things He otherwise could not do. Knowing the efficacy, therefore, of believing prayer our Lord urged His disciples to watch and to pray at every season to the end that they may escape all of these things. The believing prayer evidently

is one of the determining factors in the Christian's escaping the Tribulation. The Lord, knowing that fact, urged them to pray and will providentially lead them to do so. The result will be that they will escape those things that are coming upon the world. Efficacy of the prayer, humanly speaking, will be determined by the surrender of one's will to the Lord's will. If one is following the Lord afar off, allowing the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches to engross the major part of his time, of course, his chastisement will be the greater, but the Lord is very desirous that the church walk very close with Him in order that the chastisement be just as light as possible and that she will cooperate with Him in taking her out of the world.

#### IV. POSSIBLE ATTITUDES

The reaction to our Lord's exhortation concerning watchfulness will vary according to one's faith and consecration. Knowing this, He gave us two parables to set forth the conditions which will obtain in Christendom at the time of His coming.

##### A. *The Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servant*

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth; and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24: 45-51).

According to verses 45 and 46, the wise servant seeks not to do his own will but that of his master; hence he engages his time entirely and solely in his lord's business during his absence. Upon his return the lord gives him a bountiful portion for his faithfulness. On the other hand, the unfaithful servant being "evil" does not take his lord's instructions seriously; on the contrary, he gives vent to his evil thoughts and deeds and lives according to his desires. Hence when his lord returns, he is cut asunder from the rest, his portion is given to others, and he is cast out where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Is the servant who is lost a genuine Christian? I hardly think so because our Lord called him "that evil servant." He is a professor but not a possessor. He has come under the influence

of Christianity in a remote manner but never has really and truly been born again; otherwise he would not conduct himself as he does.

The good and faithful servant always keeps the return of his master before his mind and heart. This watchfulness proves to be the governor controlling his life. With great joy he anticipates his lord's return and is doing everything in his power to please him; on the contrary, "that evil servant" not being interested in the affairs of his lord and not loving his return is engrossed with the affairs of his own life and things that cater to his own preferences and pleasure. Hence he takes the wrong attitude toward his master's return.

These two servants illustrate two possible attitudes which Christians may take toward their Lord's return. The good servant represents those who are regenerated and saved, who love His appearing, and who are expectantly watching for Him daily. "That evil servant" stands for those people who claim to be possessors but are not, who have nominally accepted some form of Christianity but ignore the fundamental principles thereof, and who postpone or practically deny the return of the Lord. This position is indeed fatal. Whenever one abandons the watchful attitude, instantly he lowers his moral and spiritual life.

### B. *The Parable of the Foolish and Wise Virgins*

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25: 1-13).

The adverb "Then" in verse 1 of this quotation connects the parable of the virgins with the Lord's coming as set forth in verses 32-41 of the preceding chapter. In other words, this adverb is parallel in its meaning with the "Then" of 24:40. This fact

shows that the Lord was again illustrating the two possible attitudes towards His coming for His saints.

In order to understand the parable, we must have a clear-cut idea concerning the significance of "the kingdom of heaven." This expression is used very frequently by Matthew and expresses a thought cast in a Jewish mould. On account of Jewish aversion to pronouncing the sacred, memorial name of God, the Hebrew people of our Lord's day referred to God's control of the earth by such statements as the following: "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26).

For a clear conception of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" one must study its usage in the gospel according to Matthew. John the Baptist announced that the kingdom of heaven had drawn near (Matt. 3:12). Jesus went about Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23). The twelve Apostles were commissioned to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. 10:7). From these statements we are to conclude that the kingdom of heaven was actually at hand. When the opposition to Jesus became so very bitter, as we see in Matthew 12, Jesus explained what He meant by the kingdom of heaven. His teaching is set forth in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew in the form of the seven parables of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven, which John announced, which Jesus preached, and which the Twelve proclaimed, is therefore illustrated by the seven parables of the kingdom: the sower, the wheat and the tares, the grain of the mustard seed, the leaven in the three measures of meal, the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price, and the dragnet. Thus the expression "kingdom of heaven" as presented by Matthew signifies what today is popularly called Christendom. It drew near and was at hand.

The information concerning this phase of God's kingdom was withheld from the Old Testament saints. They knew there would be a time of special grace but did not understand the turn things would take when this period was reached. As an example of a passage foretelling the present age, note Psalm 110:1-3. Both comings of our Lord are set forth in this prediction and are separated by the interval during which the Messiah is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. The present dispensation, therefore, was revealed but the turn things would take in this period was withheld from the prophets. Hence our Lord at the proper time, when the crisis, recorded in Matthew 12, arose in

His ministry, set forth in parables "things hidden from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13: 35).

All who have in the remotest sense of the word come under the influence of Christ and the preaching of His gospel are in the kingdom of heaven today. As seen from the parables of Matthew 13, all the cults and "isms" that have remotely been influenced by His teaching are also in this kingdom of heaven.

One must differentiate very sharply between the church of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ, on the one hand and the kingdom of heaven on the other. The church is made up of all born again, regenerated people. Let it be understood that all who claim to be Christians or who are affiliated with some denomination are not Christians. Only the regenerated, saved ones are members of the body of Christ. To set forth in a pictorial manner the relation between the kingdom of heaven and the church of Jesus Christ, I would describe a large circle and then within it, a smaller one. The large one would represent the kingdom of heaven, whereas the smaller one within would symbolize the real church of Jesus Christ.

In this connection we must differentiate sharply and scripturally between "the kingdom of heaven" as set forth by Matthew and "the kingdom of God" as set forth in the Old Testament. The kingdom of heaven, Christendom, is in existence during the present era and will continue until our Lord's return in glory.

The church of Jesus Christ, His body, is set forth under various similtudes in the *New Testament*. It is called "the kingdom of the Son of his love" in Colossians 1:13. It is designated "the kingdom of God" in Romans 14:17. In 1 Corinthians 3 it is compared to a building and to the Jewish temple. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 it is compared to a bride. Other figures are employed, but these suffice for the present.

When our Lord Jesus returns to earth in His glory, He will set up His kingdom of righteousness which will encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea. A beautiful picture of the kingdom is set forth in Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-8, and in Isaiah 11. In addition to these passages there are many others. In the discussion of the judgment of the living nations, the sixth chapter of this book, I will examine this question more fully.

Having seen that the expression "kingdom of heaven" signifies all Christendom, we are now ready to proceed with an interpretation of the parable of the virgins. As we advance, however, we

must keep in mind that our Lord in giving this parable, as in the case of the servants just studied, was enforcing the lesson showing the necessity of watchfulness.

Christendom at the coming of our Lord is represented by both the foolish and the wise virgins who go forth to meet the bridegroom. According to Meyer's Commentary, this marriage was different from those celebrated in Palestine in the days of our Lord. On this point he has the following to say:

"Here the marriage is not represented as taking place in the house of the bridegroom, in accordance with the usual practice, but in that of the bride (Judg. 14: 10), from which the ten bridesmaids set out in the evening for the purpose of meeting the expectant bridegroom. The reason why the parable transfers the scene of the marriage to the home of the bride, is to be found in the nature of the thing to be illustrated, inasmuch as, at the time of His advent, Christ is to be understood as coming to the earth and the setting up His kingdom here below, and not in heaven."

This comment is quite illuminating and accords with the facts as presented in this parable. Dr. Meyer said the bridegroom's going to the home of the bride, contrary to the practice of that time, doubtless signified that as the bridegroom went to the place of the bride, so Christ, our bridegroom, is coming back to the place of the bride to set up His kingdom upon the earth.

Our Lord in giving this parable did not intend that we should make everything fit and find a symbolic significance for every detail mentioned in the comparison. Scholars tell us that there is one fundamental idea which is to be taught by a parable and that one is never justified in trying to interpret the details of a parable unless there is absolute, positive proof in the text to indicate such a procedure. The parable or illustration is in one point only tangent, geometrically speaking, with the truth to be illustrated. When that one common point is ascertained, then one should be satisfied and should not attempt to build up a system of doctrine upon details—the trimmings of a parable.

What, then, is the point to be illustrated? A perusal of the passage and a recognition of the circumstances which called it forth show very readily that the point to be set forth is that of watchfulness. There may be other points that could be made, but one must be very careful lest he read into this parable a system of doctrine never intended by the Lord.

The five foolish virgins showed their lack of wisdom in that they took oil in their lamps alone and did not think there would be any necessity of carrying an additional supply. Their action

showed that they were expecting the bridegroom to come very early in the evening. With that conviction they concluded there was no necessity for carrying extra oil. This attitude has found many an illustration since that time. Men are prone to delve into the future in order to unravel the secret as to the day when our Lord will return. Many dates have been set. Many have believed that the Lord would come at a specific time, have lost all interest in earthly affairs and the Lord's work, and have become fanatical. In every instance disaster has followed such date setting. It was this pernicious habit, doubtless, that our Lord had in mind when He told us of the foolish virgins.

On the other hand, the wise virgins showed their prudence in that they did not set a time for the coming of the bridegroom. They were prepared any moment for his coming since they not only had oil in their lamps but a supply with which to replenish their lamps. They were prepared for an early coming or for a postponed appearance of the bridegroom. Their attitude is the only true one. We should neither set a date for the coming of the Lord nor postpone it to the indefinite future; on the contrary, we should always bear in mind that there is a possibility of His coming at any moment. In order to bring out graphically the force of this statement, I will repeat what I frequently say from the pulpit. I am daily expecting my Lord to come for His saints. At the same time I have made my plans in regard to my work for the next thirty years. Being expectant of His return I shall welcome Him when He does appear, but in the event that He delays, I shall be diligently engaged in His cause provided He allows me to live that long and permits me to go forward with His work. Such seems to be the truth that is set forth by the five wise virgins.

To the five foolish virgins the bridegroom made the statement that he did not know them. This fact shows that they do not represent born again, regenerated souls but rather those who profess to have what they do not possess. On the other hand, those who are really and truly born again and who are expecting the imminent coming of our Lord are the ones who will be invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

The paramount question with everyone is this: Am I right with God? If so, by His grace I will press forward, always praying to the Lord to keep me in the center of His holy, directive will. On the other hand, if one is not on the Lord's side, let him accept

the Lord Jesus Christ in the fulness of faith (Jno. 5:24) and then let him work for God, realizing that the coming of the Lord draweth near.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE REWARDING OF THE SAINTS

**T**HE paragraph, Matthew 25:14-30, which contains our Lord's instructions concerning the rewarding of the saints, is connected to the parable of the virgins by the conjunction "For." Unless this point is recognized, one has difficulty in the proper interpretation of the parable of the talents.

We have already seen in the discussion of the rapture of the church that the parable of the virgins is illustrative of that event. This fact was seen by the force of the adverb "Then" introducing 25:1. In that discussion we also saw that the "kingdom of heaven" is a broad, comprehensive term including all Christendom. The conjunction "For" introducing the parable of the talents links this discussion with the parable of the virgins and the teaching concerning the rapture of the church, set forth in 24:32f.

#### I. DISTINCTION BETWEEN SALVATION AND REWARDS

Unless the distinction which exists between salvation and rewards is clearly defined, much confusion results. Hence it becomes necessary at the beginning of this discussion to analyze very clearly the Scriptural teaching on both these subjects.

##### A. *Salvation*

Men are saved by the grace of God through faith upon the basis of the merits of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which He poured out at the Cross for the redemption of sinners. This teaching is clearly set forth in such passages as John 3:16; 5:24; Romans 5:10, 11; Colossians 1:19, 20.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jno. 3:16). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (Jno. 5:24). "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. 5:10, 11). "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross;

through him, *I say*, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Col. 1: 19, 20).

A close study of the passages just quoted reveals the fact that man is saved by the grace of God through faith and that he takes hold of God's favor by simple, unswerving trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The faith that procures salvation is one that neither falters nor hesitates but steps out upon the promises of God, walking in the path of obedience. One who has such a faith cries out with Saul of Tarsus: "What shall I do, Lord?" Read Acts 22: 2-21.

Notwithstanding the clear teachings of these and other passages which could be cited, many good brethren think they see in other verses that salvation is predicated of works. For instance, Philippians 2: 12, 13 is interpreted as proof of this position:

"So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."

The proper understanding of these verses causes this delusion to vanish. A glance at them shows that Paul urged the brethren to continue during his absence just as they had done in his presence and exhorted them saying, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This appeal to "work out your own salvation" is considered as positive proof that man must work in order to obtain his salvation. When one takes only part of a sentence, frequently he can prove almost any doctrine. This procedure is contrary to logic and good reasoning. To understand this passage we must recognize the fact that Paul wrote this letter to people who were already saved, to those in whose lives God had already begun "a good work" (Phil. 1:6). We arrive at the real teaching of this passage when we read verse 13 in connection with 12. We see that Paul urged the Philippians to work out their salvation "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." In other words, Paul was exhorting them to work out in their own lives that which God had worked into them. The Greek is explicit on this point. Our translators in verse 13 could have given a little better rendering. Instead of saying "to will and to work," which words are a slavish adherence to the English infinitive, they should have rendered the Greek this way: "for it is God who inworks in you both the willing and the doing." Though, as a rule, "to" introduces an

infinite, yet this is not always the case as every High School student knows. The Greek infinitive is a verbal noun and frequently carries the article. The thought, therefore, is that, since God works into the heart of the Christian both the desire and the power to carry out the aspiration, he is to work it out in his own life. In other words, what God works into our hearts and lives we are to work out in action. This principle may be illustrated by one who by nature is a musician. God has worked into his very soul the ability to sing and to play. Regardless of the amount of talent that is thus God-given, he will not become a musician unless he works out in practice that which God has worked into his very soul at birth. At the new birth God works into man's nature a new creation. The Spirit of God regenerates the heart of the believer and dwells in it. He is constantly endeavoring to put into the heart the desire to do good work and to give power to carry out this God-inspired yearning; if the Christian will not yield himself to the Spirit of God but, on the contrary, goes his own way, these spiritual endowments will never manifest themselves in his life. Hence Paul urged the brethren to full consecration and surrender in order that they might be responsive to spiritual influences and to work out in their lives what God has already worked into their souls.

### B. *Rewards*

God will reward the believer according to his works. This truth the Lord sets forth in Matthew 16:27: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds." In 2 Corinthians 5:10 Paul stated that the Lord will reward each person according to the things done in the body: "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad." One must not confound this "judgment seat of Christ" with the judgment of the "great white throne" which is found in Revelation 20:11-15. The judgment of the great white throne follows the millennial age and is the tribunal before which the wicked are brought for judgment and condemnation. That the Christians will never come before it is clear from John 5:24 which declares emphatically that those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not come into the judgment but have passed out of death into life: "Verily,

verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." Since the judgment of the believer occurred at the Cross, there is no necessity for his coming into judgment.

But, as seen above, we come before the judgment seat of Christ to receive our rewards for service rendered. This fact is declared in Romans 14: 11. A glance at the context of this passage shows us that in the church at Rome there were two classes: the weak and the strong. The weak brethren, being uninformed with reference to the great Scriptural truths, were judging and condemning all whose ideas and lives did not coincide with their standards. On the other hand, the stronger brethren, the better educated and informed ones, were despising and setting at naught the less fortunate believers. Both classes were in error and failed to manifest the Christian spirit; hence Paul reprimanded them. In doing so he addressed the weaker brethren with the following question: "But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother?" You are judging him by your own narrow, limited, and imperfect standard. On the other hand, he addressed the stronger brethren by asking them a similar question: "Or thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" These brethren gave the less fortunate ones no consideration whatsoever. It seemed that they were absolutely ignored in all matters and frowned upon by the stronger brethren. This unfortunate condition was sharply reprobated by the Apostle Paul who showed them that they were not appointed by the Lord to sit in judgment of others,

"for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, And every tongue shall confess to God.

So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14: 10-12).

Here Paul declared that all Christians must appear before the judgment seat of God. In the Corinthian passage referred to above he stated that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Do these two passages refer to the same judgment seat? In my opinion they do, although I will not be dogmatic on this point. Christ was God in human form. To these brethren sitting in judgment on others—one human judging another—Paul showed their inconsistency by stating that we are not to be brought before a human tribunal but rather before God's judgment seat.

When one comes before the judgment seat of Christ, referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:10, he is appearing before the judgment seat of God. When we appear before Christ's judgment seat, we shall receive the things done in the body—our rewards. From a reading of the fourteenth chapter of Romans we see that these brethren were sitting in judgment on other brethren and passing sentence upon their daily conduct, life, and walk. In other words, they were assuming to themselves the functions and prerogatives which belong to God alone; hence Paul in reprimanding them declared that they were arrogating to themselves an office which belongs to no human but to God only. Since we know that by mutual agreement in the Holy Trinity all judgment has been delivered unto the Son, "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son" (Jno. 5:22), we can be certain that this judgment seat of God referred to by Paul in Romans 14 is the judgment seat of Christ mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Showing the Roman brethren that judgment belongs to God and not to men, Paul quoted Isaiah 45:23 which declares that to the Lord every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God. In order to understand this passage properly, one must examine it in its original setting. In verse 23 this one God and Saviour, still addressing the remnant of the nations, speaks of an oath, which he has made in righteousness, to the effect that to him every knee shall bow and every tongue swear. Since this prediction is spoken to the living nations which survive the Great Tribulation, obviously the bowing of the knee and the taking of the oath here foretold mean acknowledging the authority of this Saviour and swearing allegiance to Him.

The message of which the verse under consideration is the conclusion begins with Isaiah 44:24 and runs to 45:25. The introductory paragraph consists of 44:24-28. The first verse of this section speaks of God as the Creator of the universe and His control of the same, whereas the following one speaks of His providential workings among the nations. Then in verse 26 the prophet declared that God reveals Himself through Israel and her messengers and fulfills every promise. The two concluding verses of the chapter fortell the special providential ministry which Cyrus the Great, the Persian, would perform two hundred years hence—namely, releasing the captives from Babylon and issuing the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple. In 45:1-7 Isaiah

showed that God would prepare the way for Cyrus and would make his way straight, enabling him to carry out His eternal plans and purposes as they affected Israel at the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Cyrus is called the Lord's anointed though he did not know God. This naming of Cyrus and designating the work which he would accomplish is parallel to God's calling Jeremiah to his prophetic ministry before his birth. The Lord's outlining the special work which Cyrus would do two hundred years hence would be, when the prediction was fulfilled completely, absolute and positive proof to the nations of the world that Jehovah is God and that it is He who is steering the course of history towards one great consummation.

The restoration of Israel brought about by Cyrus, which occurred in the sixth century B. C., served the prophet as the background upon which he painted the future, grand, and glorious restoration of Israel when she will be brought from the four corners of the earth and rehabilitated in her own land. Hence in an ecstatic manner, verse 8, the prophet called upon the heavens to rain down salvation and righteousness. This divine interposition in the affairs of men will result in the springing forth of righteousness out of the earth.

In verses 8 and 9 the prophet pronounced a woe upon the critics of the Lord who find fault with God's overruling providential care of the human family. Having shown the insolence of these critics of the divine government, the prophet in verses 11-17 continued his description of the glorious restoration of Israel in the future. When this promise is fulfilled the labor of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia and the Sabeans will be given Israel. The nations at that time will come in great humility and will acknowledge to Israel that God is in the midst of her.

God will fulfill the promise to Israel concerning her final blessed state in the land of the fathers. The fulfilment of this prediction is essential to the carrying out of the eternal decrees, for, according to verse 18, God created the earth not a waste but formed it that it might be inhabited. According to Psalm 115:16, "The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; but the earth hath he given to the children of men." No sooner had God placed man upon the earth than the devil came with strategy and lying and led him to disobey God. This act of rebellion temporarily delayed the plan of God with reference to the earth and its being inhabited.

By his disobedience man forfeited his right to dominion over the earth, which was given to him and which is recorded in Genesis 1:26-31, but the Lord will not permit Satan's connivings and man's disobedience to thwart the eternal councils. Eventually He will come back to that same, original purpose concerning the earth's being inhabited. As is seen by the conjunction "for" (Isa. 45:18), the statement that God created the earth not a waste but to be inhabited is an explanation of verse 17, which declares that "Israel shall be saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation: and ye shall not be put to shame nor confounded world without end." This grammatical connection shows that Israel's being saved in the future and restored to the land of the fathers at the conclusion of this age is but the unfolding of the eternal plan of God. Therefore in verse 19 the prophet could say with all assurance to Israel that the Lord did not say unto her "seek me in vain." On the contrary, when the Almighty gave her the invitation to seek Him, He was speaking in righteousness.

By the time we reach verse 19 the prophet has given the full vision of Israel restored and the establishment of the glorious kingdom of God upon the earth. The paragraph, verses 20-25, is spoken from the standpoint of Israel's being already reinstated to divine favor and in her own land. These verses also assume that which is repeatedly declared in many passages of the prophets—namely, that the judgments of the Great Tribulation will purge the world of the bulk of humanity, only a small remnant of the nations surviving this great ordeal. Our same prophet foretold the fiery trials of this great day of Jehovah as is set forth in Isaiah 2:12f. In verse 20 of our present chapter the prophet addressed those "that are escaped of the nations." This statement shows that he was carried forward to the Post-Tribulation days and was addressing those who survive the fiery judgments of the day of the Lord. In this paragraph Isaiah began to impersonate the Messiah and to invite the surviving nations to a great convention in order that He might reason with them. In the latter part of verse 20 he showed the futility of idol worship. Following this statement, verse 21, he called attention to the force of predictive prophecy that has already been fulfilled:

"Declare ye, and bring *it* forth; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath showed this from ancient time? who hath declared it of old? have not I, Jehovah? and there is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none besides me."

To what does the demonstrative "this" refer? In this connection it can refer to nothing except the prediction that Cyrus in his releasing the captives and giving orders for the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the temple simply would be carrying out what God approximately two hundred years prior to that time had foretold.

The fact that the prediction was fulfilled literally is a guarantee of its divine inspiration. The restoration from Babylon under Cyrus was typical of Israel's final restoration from the nations and of her being regathered and established in the homeland never to be removed therefrom. Thus the pictures of the two restorations blend. In fulfilment of Isaiah's impersonation and prediction, King Messiah, after He comes to the earth and mounts the throne of David, will neither force the will, nor coerce the people by His omnipotence. Rather He will reason with them from the standpoint of fulfilled prophecy.

In verse 22 we see the loving, kind invitation Messiah will give those who are escaped of the nations to come unto Him that they may be saved, for He is the only God and Saviour of humanity. This invitation is strengthened by the prediction found in verse 23 which is to the effect that He has sworn by Himself and that the word has gone forth from His mouth in righteousness: "unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." This confession will be in substance that King Messiah is divine and the Saviour of the world. Each one making it will swear allegiance to Him to become a loyal subject. In verse 24 the universal opinion obtaining in that day will be that in King Messiah are righteousness and strength and that in Him the seed of Israel is justified.

This same picture of the people who have survived the Great Tribulation and who come and bow in humble submission to the Messiah is set forth in Psalm 72. In verse 6 we see Messiah's coming down from heaven to earth. His arrival here will be to the world what the showers are to the mown grass. According to verse 7 in His days the righteous will flourish and there will be abundance of peace. He will have dominion, according to verse 8, from sea to sea and from the River unto the ends of the earth. Then shall all the peoples remaining upon the earth with their kings come and render loving homage to Him (vss. 9-11).

At length I have discussed the setting of Isaiah 45:23 which Paul quotes in Romans 14:11 to support the proposition that all

Christians must come before the judgment seat of God. In this examination we have seen that the original passage which foretells the universal acknowledgment of the Messiah as Saviour refers to the conversion of the world to King Messiah when He sits upon His throne of glory during the millennial age, but in the Roman letter Paul applies this passage from Isaiah to Christians' appearing before the Lord to be judged. Will the saints have to wait until Christ sits upon His throne in the millennium to receive their rewards, since the promise in the original context refers to that time? On this point one cannot be dogmatic. We shall learn as we study the parable of the talents and of the pounds that the saints will not enter into possession and realization of their rewards until He sits upon His throne of glory. Since our Lord spoke the parable of the talents in connection with the rapture of the church, it is quite likely that they will appear before the judgment seat of Christ after the rapture and before they return to earth with Him for the glorious reign. The order of the discourse in Matthew 25 seems to indicate that such is true. If this position be correct, it is in perfect harmony with Isaiah's passage. At the present time the believers bow in humble submission before the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge His authority and accept His salvation. When He sits upon His throne of glory in Jerusalem those remaining upon the earth at that time will likewise acknowledge His divinity and authority and will swear allegiance to Him.

In his great passage on the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ (Phil. 2:5-11) Paul referred to Isaiah 45:23: "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven and *things* on earth and *things* under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In this passage the apostle was looking forward to the time when all intelligent human beings shall recognize and acknowledge the lordship and authority of Jesus Christ. The angels in heaven, men upon the earth, and demons in the underworld shall all acknowledge His sovereignty. But of what time was Paul in this passage speaking? This question is answered by a reference to Hebrews 1:6, which affirms that "And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." When Jesus returns to earth again, there will be a general

and universal ascription of praise and worship to Him as Lord and Saviour. This same thought is set forth in Revelation 5:13, 14 in anticipation of the coronation of the Lord Jesus as King of the world at His coming. Everything in the universe is here represented as rendering to Him divine worship and adoration. In this passage John simply echoed the general praise and worship set forth in Psalm 148.

From this extended study of the passages referring to the judgment seat of Christ we see that God's people will appear before Him to receive the things done in the body according to their works and to render praise and adoration. Though we may not be dogmatic as to when the saints come for the first time before the judgment seat of Christ, it is quite possible, and even probable, that they first appear there at the time of the rapture and receive the information concerning what rewards they are to receive. When the Lord comes all the way to the earth and establishes His kingdom, they come before His throne and in the presence of the peoples of the earth receive officially their commission to function in the positions already announced to them. Such a theory harmonizes all of the facts set forth in these various passages. As the information is not full on this point, it behooves us to speak with great reserve and modesty.

## II. QUALITY GOODS AND QUALITY SERVICE

Under section I we have already seen that men are saved by the grace of God but are rewarded according to their works. In this section I am hoping to set forth the Scriptural teaching concerning our Lord's demand for quality goods and quality service. The principal passage which deals with this thought is the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

### A. *A Bird's-eye View of the Parable*

As already noted, the parable of the talents is linked with that which has preceded—namely, the teaching relative to the rapture and the church's being ready for that great and glorious event. The necessity of watchfulness is set forth in 25:13 and is explained more fully by the entire parable of the talents. Vigilance and preparedness for the Lord's return at any time are, therefore, illustrated by a man who leaving his own country travels to another. Before starting, however, he calls his servants and delivers

to them his goods. An equal distribution is not made; on the contrary, the man recognizes the ability of his servants and places in each man's hand that amount of goods which his ability will allow him to handle with perfect satisfaction. Hence to one man there is given five talents; to another, two; and to another, one talent—to each one according to his several ability. Thereupon the man takes his departure.

During the absence of their lord all the servants, except the one-talent man, receiving his goods began to trade therewith. In this parable two of the three servants realize the responsibility that rests upon them. They do not render eye-service to be pleasing to men; rather they take a heart-interest in that which they do and labor as faithfully as if their master were present. On the other hand, one of the servants not feeling any responsibility toward his master buries his talent and squanders his time.

Finally the lord of those servants returning calls them for a reckoning. The one to whom five talents were entrusted is summoned first. He comes bringing his five talents with five additional ones which he has gained by legitimate business transactions. To this faithful servant the lord pronounces the welcome applaudit: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Next, the one who received two talents comes, bringing both the goods which he had received and two additional talents which he likewise gained by legitimate traffic. To him the master speaks the same words of commendation and gives him a reward commensurate with the service which he rendered. Finally the slothful servant, who does not feel his responsibility, is called. He brings the one talent only which was entrusted to him but is profuse in making excuses for his delinquency. This is no time for excuses. The master turns his case over to the proper authorities and he is cast into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### B. *Detailed Examination*

Having viewed the parable in a general way, we must now examine it more minutely. Some of the parables of our Lord are self-evident and others require His explanation. This one falls into the former class; hence with assurance we can approach it and extract from it the great lessons which it teaches.

## 1. CHRIST'S RETURN TO HEAVEN

Since the parable of the talents was given to enforce the exhortation to watchfulness (see vs. 13, 14), obviously the man of this parable going into another country is Christ. He could represent none other since our Lord was speaking of His return from heaven for His saints. The country to which He goes can be none other than that of heaven. On the last night of Christ's earthly ministry (John 14) He spoke to His disciples very clearly relative to the necessity of His going away in order to prepare a place for His people. The fact that He went to prepare such a place for them is a guarantee that He will return some time for them and take them to Himself.

In the second recorded discourse by the Apostle Peter (Acts 3) he made the following declaration:

"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old" (Acts 3: 19-21).

This passage will assist us in grasping the parable in hand. In order to understand the quotation, we must study its immediate context. The occasion of the sermon was Peter's supernaturally healing the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate. This miracle together with the man's abounding joy attracted great throngs to Solomon's porch. Peter took advantage of the occasion and preached Christ to them, declaring that the God of Abraham had in that miracle just performed glorified His servant Jesus whom they had delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate when the latter was determined to release Him. By their rejection of Jesus they killed the Prince of life whom God raised from the dead. To this fact Peter declared that he and the apostles were witnesses. In verse 17 he affirmed that his audience had executed our Lord in ignorance as the rulers also had done. In doing this they were simply carrying out the things which God had foretold through the mouth of the prophets would come to His Messiah. This exposition led up to the great appeal found in the verses quoted above.

The Jews and their rulers had turned from the Christ and had denied Him, causing Him to be put to death; hence Peter called upon them to repent of this and all other sins and to turn again to the Christ whom they had just rejected. By genuine repentance

and their turning to the Saviour the apostle assured his auditors that their sins would be blotted out. By way of strengthening this exhortation he insisted upon their doing it in order that there might come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord and that He might send the Messiah back to them again.

What is meant by "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord"? Since this statement is given in addition to the promise of the blotting out of their sins, it is evident that it refers to something in addition to the forgiveness of trespasses. What did such language mean to Peter's audience? He spoke of soul-refreshing and of its coming from the presence of the Lord. This refreshing is, according to the language, in the presence of God but upon their turning to the Messiah he promised that this special blessing will come from the presence of God down to them. Some have understood by this peculiar expression, peace, joy, and spiritual energizing done by the indwelling Spirit in the heart of the believer. This explanation is not satisfying, for the spiritual uplift referred to comes to one when he has been regenerated and forgiven. May not this special idiom be an echo of the Old Testament language? It is quite likely that such passages as Ezekiel 34:25-31 and 36:22-31 were in the apostle's mind and formed or moulded his phraseology on this occasion. A glance at verses 25 and 26 of the former chapter shows that the prophet was speaking of the time when God will make a covenant of peace with the evil beasts and cause them to pass out of the land of Canaan. Israel then will dwell safely in her place. "And I will cause the shower to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing." In the next verse the prediction occurs that the harvest of fruits and vegetables will be in abundance. The showers mentioned in this passage primarily refer to the restored rain in its seasons during the great millennial kingdom, as is seen from a glance at the entire context.

The great evangelical prophet Isaiah in 44:1-5 foretold the spiritual blessings that will come to Israel but presented them under the figures of the rain and irrigation:

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water-courses" (vss. 3, 4).

It is clear from these verses and the context that the water here foretold as being poured out upon Israel symbolizes the coming of

the Holy Spirit in His reviving power. Other passages could be cited but these suffice.

The showers mentioned by Peter will come from the presence of God. When the Holy Spirit comes into the life of the individual, his heart is refreshed as is the ground by the coming of the rain. In view of all these facts it seems most probable that the expression under consideration refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the nation of Israel when she turns to Him.

Connected with the promise we are studying is the following one: "and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus." Israel is called upon to turn to the Messiah and to accept Him in order that God may send Him, the Messiah, the appointed one, from heaven to them. This coming can be none other than what is usually termed the second coming of our Lord in glory at the end of the Tribulation period. This Messiah whom God will send when Israel turns is the one who has been appointed by the Lord for her. When she turns to Him, He will immediately return to her. Jesus was the Messiah whom God appointed for Israel. She rejected this chosen one; hence she may not expect another deliverer because the Lord will not reject the Messiah whom she denied. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Hebrew Messiah by the decree of God. She may expect none other. This is the great truth of which Israel at the present time stands in need. The nation in the person of the rulers rejected Him in ignorance. God does not force the will of any man; hence Jesus retired to heaven and will there await the turning of the Jewish nation to Him. This curious episode was foreshadowed by Moses in his relation to the children of Israel. He first presented himself to his brethren to deliver them. They in ignorance of God's plan, rejected him; hence he retired from the scene and remained away for forty years—the period of trial. At the expiration of that time Israel in her great distress was ready to receive him and did so; then he delivered the nation from Egyptian bondage. Thus it will be with reference to Israel and her rejected Messiah.

In verse 21 Peter spoke of our Lord's absence in the following words: "whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old." The heavens must receive Jesus until the times of the restoration of all things of which God spoke. What is the significance of the clause, "whom the heaven must receive"? This language seems to indicate obligation on the

part of heaven to receive Jesus during this period of His rejection. Is He not a welcome guest there? Does this statement seem to imply that He is not wanted? Not at all. There lies back in Peter's mind the plan of God as outlined in the Old Testament and his language here reflects this purpose of the Almighty. Psalm 110 gives us the entire redemptive career of the Messiah. Speaking dramatically, I would say that, when the scene opens in that psalm, Messiah is in the midst of Jerusalem whose inhabitants become hostile to Him. Therefore the Lord God in heaven invites Him to leave Jerusalem and to ascend to His right hand, there to remain until He (God) puts Messiah's enemies under His feet. When this is done, He returning to Jerusalem will be welcomed enthusiastically by the descendants of those who rejected Him at His first coming. Knowing, therefore, the entire outline of Messiah's career in relation to Israel and realizing that the plans were literally being fulfilled, Peter expressed the thought in the language of the clause under consideration. Since it was foretold that Messiah would have these experiences, Peter chose his language with reference to the present stay of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven in terms of the necessity for the carrying out of God's eternal plan. Therefore this language does not imply that Jesus was an unwelcome guest at the court of heaven but rather it reflects the absolute necessity of carrying out God's program of redemption.

The Lord Jesus will remain in heaven until the times of the restoration of all things of which God spoke by the prophets. Unfortunately this sentence is sometimes quoted as if it taught the doctrine of the final restoration of all things. Let the reader notice that this doctrine is not here set forth. Peter is far from saying that all things will be restored to the original order. His language can be construed to mean that only those things of which God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets will be restored. In order, therefore, to understand the significance of this language, one must investigate the messages of the prophets. In a word, what do they say? Do they tell us, for instance, that Satan and the fallen angels will be restored to God's favor and that this earth will be the paradise that it was before the fall? In vain will one search the Old Testament Scriptures for such teachings. On the other hand, he will see in such a passage as Psalm 8 that the original authority delegated to man will be restored to him eventually. The prophet Isaiah (2:1-4; 11:1-12:6; 65:1-66:24) and

Ezekiel gave us wonderful pictures of the kingdom age (34: 1-31; 36: 1-28). The Lord will make good every word and restore all which He has promised.

The fulfilment of the Old Testament predictions will be realized when Jesus leaves heaven and returns to earth. Peter's language seems to echo the promise found in Micah 4: 1-8. This vision is parallel to the one presented in Isaiah 2: 1-4 with the additional information appearing in verses 6-8 of Micah's prophecy:

"In that day, saith Jehovah, will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem."

This prophet promises that the former dominion shall be restored to the daughter of Zion when Jehovah reigns in Jerusalem. In view of this and many other predictions there is no wonder that the apostles at the time of the ascension asked Jesus, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They well knew that Jehovah had in His Word promised to restore the kingdom to Israel. The beautiful thing about it is that they believed what God said. Our Lord by His answer admitted that the kingdom will be restored to Israel: "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority" (Acts 1: 7). The times or seasons of what? Only one answer is possible—the times or the seasons of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Peter's statement in 3: 21 likewise seems to echo this answer of our Lord found in Acts 1: 7.

The apostle's language reflects, therefore, the redemptive career of the Messiah as set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures. In this sermon Peter called upon his audience to accept Jesus from whom they nationally had just turned away in order that they might be forgiven, that there might come these seasons of refreshing from God's presence, and that the Messiah might return and restore all things foretold. Since his language echoed the plan of God as outlined in the Old Testament, it is evident that this sermon was a stirring appeal to the entire nation to accept the Lord Jesus Christ in order that He might return and restore the things promised. This passage, therefore, is the clarion call of God to the Jewish nation to repent, to repudiate the national sin of reject-

ing the Messiah, and to turn to Him in order that God might carry out this prearranged program in the eternal plan of the ages.

According to the Old Testament program, Jesus, the One appointed for Israel, has returned to the right hand of the throne of God and will never come back until she hears and heeds this stirring appeal for a national turning to the rejected Messiah. Israel by her blindness is at the present day delaying the unfolding of God's plan. Never will Messiah return until the nation officially welcomes Him. Never will the nation welcome Him and plead for Him to return and fulfill these ancient promises so long as she thinks that He was an impostor. Never will she see the light relative to Him until those who have the truth of the gospel present it to her in an intelligible manner from the standpoint of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the final analysis we who have the truth concerning the Messiah and God's plan of the ages are holding up, humanly speaking, the procession, since God has taken us into His confidence and has called us to be coworkers with Him. We should bend our every effort in getting the truth of the gospel to Israel in order that she might see in Jesus of Nazareth her true Messiah and welcome His return.

The reader should note that the seasons of refreshing come from the presence of God prior to the personal return of the Lord Jesus to the earth. This order of events seems to reflect the promise given in such passages as Zechariah 12: 10f. The season of refreshing coming from the presence of God probably is the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem which event culminates in a mighty revival throughout the nation. When He, the Spirit of conviction, comes upon Israel she will begin to pray as never before and will turn to the Lord Jesus whom she has pierced and plead for His return. In response to her repentance and plaintive wail, He will rend the heavens, come down, establish His kingdom upon earth, and restore all things which God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets.

To the casual reader it may seem that I have gone far afield from an exposition of the parable of the talents by discussing the sermon in Acts 3. I had to do so in order to bring out clearly the thought presented by Jesus in His statement (Matt. 25: 19), "Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh." This "long time" of our Lord's absence from earth, as said before, was clearly

revealed in the Old Testament and is substantiated by this illuminating sermon which I have examined.

## 2. VARYING CAPACITIES OF THE SERVANTS

According to verse 15, the master delivered to each of his servants his goods, distributing to each according to his capacity. To the one having the ability to handle five talents the like amount was entrusted; to the one possessing capacity for handling two talents only the same amount was given; and to the one-talent man the Master gave only one talent.

To the casual reader it is evident that each one was entrusted with the amount that he could manage perfectly. This fact shows very clearly that the Lord desires quality goods and quality service. The one who possesses the ability to manage five talents is incapable of handling ten, or even six. The two-talent man cannot successfully use, to advantage, three talents. He can, however, to perfect satisfaction manage two talents. The fact that the Master did not give the two-talent man one talent (what he could manage successfully) shows that the Lord wishes each of his servants to use his capacities and abilities at one hundred percent efficiency. Furthermore, it also proves that He desires each to use his talents—all for his absent Lord's interest.

In view of this teaching, it is obligatory upon every Christian to use successfully all of the divinely conferred endowments and talents for the advancement of the Lord's cause among men. We are placed in the world not to seek our own pleasure but rather to advance the Lord's cause unto the ends of the earth. Unfortunately, the bulk of humanity does not realize this most important truth. When one accepts the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit regenerates the heart and abides in the soul in order to work in and through him the plans and the purposes of God. This truth is set forth in Ephesians 2: 8-10. Note the language "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. . . ." The Ediphone company employed men who worked upon the raw materials that were used in the construction of this machine into which I am now talking and who perfected the finished product. The object of this work was the production of a machine that will serve the purchaser. Hence we properly say that this Ediphone is the workmanship of the Ediphone Company. In a most efficient manner it serves the writer. With it I can quadruple my literary output. In the same way God works upon those who

accept Him, regenerating their souls and empowering them by His spirit in the inward man that they might carry forward His plans and purposes among men. But all do not have the same natural endowments. Some of God's servants are five-talent men whereas others have only two talents, and still others possess only one talent of ability. The Lord Jesus Christ at the present time takes this fact into consideration and will do so in His awarding rewards at His coming.

### 3. THE FAITHFUL SERVANTS

The one who received the five talents was absolutely faithful and true. He used His Lord's goods with one hundred percent efficiency and gained five other talents. The one receiving the two talents was as faithful as he to whom the five were entrusted; though having limited capacity, but being faithful, he used his two talents for the advancement of his master's cause and gained two others.

At the return of the lord, according to the parable, the servants were brought before him and were required to give an account of their stewardship. The man receiving the five talents with joy brought five additional ones and turned them over to his master, who with satisfaction said, "well done, good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." These words were indeed music to the heart and the soul of the faithful servant.

The one who received the two talents was just as faithful with his master's goods as was the five-talent man and gained other two talents. Hence when he was called to give an account of his stewardship, he brought his two additional talents. To him his master spoke the same words of commendation as he had done to the five-talent servant. Where there is much given much is required and where there is little given little is required. The Lord has never been unreasonable in his expectations and demands but he does have a right to desire from each of his servants a faithful discharge of duty and an increase according to the ability given.

### 4. THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT

When the one-talent man was called to render an account of his stewardship, he came bringing only the talent which had been given him. Immediately he started to make excuses. What he said was simply a smoke screen to shield his unfaithfulness. Assuming the correctness of the explanation, the Lord showed the

inconsistency of this servant's conduct. When he made his plea the master rejected it and showed that there was no reason for his unfaithfulness.

#### 5. THE RETURN OF CHRIST AND THE REWARDING OF THE SERVANTS

The one who received the five talents and gained five others was by his lord placed over many things. In the same manner, the two-talent man, who gained two others, received a reward commensurate with the service rendered.

The rewarding of the saints, according to Matthew 16: 27-28, will be at the time our Lord returns. Hence the rewarding explained in this parable will be at the second coming of Jesus.

The one-talent man who buried the money entrusted to him and refused to use it for his master's advantage, even that which he had he lost and was cast into outer darkness. The talent with which he originally was entrusted, according to verse 28, was taken from him and given to the one who had the ten talents. To every one the Lord gives some talent. If he uses it properly for God's glory and for the blessing of humanity, he will have an increase. On the other hand, if he fails to use it, even that which he has decreases and finally reaches the vanishing point. To illustrate this principle, I may say that, should I tie my arm in a sling and not exercise it for several weeks, it would lose its strength. This principle obtains in both the spiritual and intellectual realms. According to this prediction it also will be one of the factors determining the rewarding of God's people.

The Lord gives each one of us certain capacities. He is to develop and use them for God's glory. It is reasonable to suppose that we shall in the future ages exercise the talents which we have in this life developed. There seems to be authority in the Scriptures that in eternity we shall constantly be growing and developing in our capacity for service and worship. The positions which we occupy in the millennial age and throughout eternity will be determined by our faithfulness during this life.

The one receiving the one talent and refusing to use it for his Master's advantage is to be cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. In this connection the question arises, Is this man lost? But a prior question demands consideration. Was he ever saved? To answer this latter query one must remember that the parable of the talents, which is intro-

duced by the conjunction "for," explains the situation that will exist at the coming of the Lord.

As seen already, the parable of the ten virgins illustrates the "kingdom of heaven." We have also observed that the kingdom of heaven embraces all Christendom. Since the parable of the talents is explanatory of that of the virgins, we can see that the Lord in this latter parable was not discussing the Church (the body of Christ) but rather all Christendom. There are many in the great realm of Christian profession who have never been born again. Many of them hold membership in churches but they have never experienced the miracle of grace known as regeneration. I am inclined to believe the one-talent man refers to the same characters as do the five foolish virgins to whom the Lord will say "I know you not."

What is meant by the unfaithful servant's being cast into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Are we to understand this as a reference to what in theological terms is called hell, everlasting punishment? Notwithstanding the denials, current in our day, of the Scripture teaching of future punishment, it behooves each one who knows and who loves the Lord to take his stand uncompromisingly upon the Word of God.

From this parable we see that the faithful servants were invited to enter into the joys of their Lord, but the unfaithful sluggard was denied that privilege and was cast into outer darkness where there will be the weeping, the wailing, and the gnashing of teeth. Our Lord used words similar to these in Matthew 8:12. Further light on this subject is to be found in Matthew 5:22:

"But I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire."

The gehenna of fire also is mentioned in verse 30:

"And if thy right hand causes thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell."

Again, our Lord in teaching the necessity of humility spoke of future punishment in the two following verses (Matt. 18:8-9):

"And if thy hand or thy foot causes thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire."

There are two words in the original text which in the older versions are rendered by the English word "hell." "Hell" is of Anglo-Saxon origin and etymologically meant "to conceal or hide." In the King James version it is employed to do triple duty. For instance, in the passages quoted above (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30) it is used to translate the Greek word "gehenna"; in Luke 16:23 it renders the Greek word "hades"; it also serves as a translation of "Tartarus" (II Peter 3:4). Because of the loose translation of the Common Version, much confusion has been introduced into our theology. The Revised Version has attempted to remedy this situation by giving the proper renderings in the footnotes.

"Hades" is a Greek work transliterated into English. In the original language it was the name of the place to which the departed spirits went, both righteous and wicked, prior to the death, burial, triumph, and resurrection of our Lord. "Gehenna" refers to the place where the wicked will be punished as is evident from the quotation given above. The word, "tartarus," indicates the place in which certain rebellious angels have been incarcerated awaiting the day of final judgment. It is clear from a close study of all passages in which these three words occur that different places are meant.

Tartarus is a place, as stated above, to which certain rebellious angels who revolted when Satan attempted to match swords with God were cast. It is called "the pit of the abyss" in Revelation 9:1 and simply "the abyss" in 20:1. Hades is a place to which the spirits of the dead, both righteous and wicked, went upon death prior to the triumph of our Lord at His resurrection. In Hades there were two apartments separated by a great gulf. This situation is given in Luke 16:19-31. That apartment to which the righteous went is, in this passage, called Abraham's bosom, but the place to which the wicked are assigned is not here named. That it is a place of punishment is evident from verse 24, which declares that the rich man in pleading with Abraham asked that Lazarus be sent for water to cool his tongue, for, said he, "I am in anguish in this flame." One must not conclude, however, that Hades and the suffering to which the wicked there are subjected are the same as Gehenna with its eternal punishment mentioned in other passages.

The institution of *hades*, called in the Hebrew language *sheol*, must not be confounded with *Gehenna*, the place into which all of the wicked will be cast at the end of the thousand years of our

Lord's glorious reign upon the earth. *Hades*, as stated above, had two apartments: one to which the righteous went; the other to which the wicked were consigned. Thus all the dead, prior to our Lord's triumph, went to Hades. When, however, he conquered the spiritual hosts of the unseen world (Col. 2: 14), he triumphed over these hidden powers of darkness, coming forth from the grave and being followed by many of the saints who appeared with him in the Holy City (Matt. 27: 51-52). When he ascended on high, those thus raised accompanied him into heaven (Eph. 4: 8-9).

Since our Lord's triumph, the righteous upon death go immediately into the presence of Christ.

"Being therefore always of good courage and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. (for we walk by faith not by sight)" (II Cor. 5: 6, 7). "But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better; yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake" (Phil. 1: 23, 24). "And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6: 9, 10).

The spirits of "the dead in Christ" are in the presence of the Lord now and await the time of the rapture for their resurrection bodies. On the other hand, the wicked upon death seem still to go to Hades, or Sheol, there to await the time of the judgment of the great white throne (Rev. 20: 11-15).

Gehenna, on the other hand, is in various passages called "the lake of fire." A few verses from John's preaching may throw light upon this subject.

"And even now the axe lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3: 10-12).

Notice, in verse 10 John used the illustration of the unfruitful tree and its being cast into the fire. It is evident from the context that he was not talking about the literal tree but was using it as an illustration to present a spiritual lesson. The process of the separation of the wicked from the righteous is further elucidated in the language: "He (Messiah) shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire." The baptism of the Holy Spirit here mentioned seems to be a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Jewish na-

tion in the Millennium as is set forth in Joel 2: 28f: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour forth my spirit upon all flesh," etc. The baptism of fire spoken of by John is thrown over against the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This truth becomes immediately apparent when one realizes that this language was spoken to a mixed audience, some of whom wanted the truth and both would and did accept Jesus their Messiah when John pointed Him out, whereas the great majority did not long for the facts concerning Christ and did not accept Him as the Messiah upon His coming into prominence. The process of separating the wicked from the righteous and the pronouncement of the doom which will at the revelation of Jesus come upon all on the earth are further set forth in the language of verse 12 which declares:

"And he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."

It is clear that the word *fire* in verse 10 refers to the literal fire, which burns bushes and trees, spoken of in verse 10. The fire mentioned in verse 11, so far as its context is concerned, may either be literal or figurative. If the former, it is unspeakably horrible; if, however, it be the latter, it is far beyond our comprehension, for the figure cannot fully set forth that which is signified. For in verse 12, as the facts of the passage show, reference is made to that which is called fire in verse 11. It is true, however, that the term, *fire* is borrowed from the literal fire used in burning chaff, but, when the adjective "unquenchable" is used in connection with it, immediately it becomes apparent that this fire is not an ordinary one.

Further light on this subject may be gathered from the parable of the tares in Matthew 13: 24-30 and our Lord's explanation (verses 36-43). In the parable the tares are bound in bundles to be burned (verse 30). In the interpretation He stated that the tares, "the sons of the evil one," shall be cast "into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (verse 42). Since our Lord interpreted the burning of the tares as the casting of the sons of the evil one into the furnace of fire and since He explained the whole parable literally, we must accept this portion of His exegesis as literal unless there is absolute and positive evidence that the context demands a figurative or symbolic meaning or unless such an interpretation flatly contradicts the plain, unmistakable teaching of some other passage. Since there is no evidence

in this passage demanding a departure from the literal interpretation and since such a common sense explanation does not contravene any other known passage, we are forced to interpret the furnace of fire literally.

I am well aware of the fact that in this day and time the doctrine of a literal hell is very unpopular. I may not and cannot see the philosophy altogether of such an institution. Since, however, the Scriptures, wherever it has been possible to test them, have been found to be literally true, it behooves us to accept all other statements of doctrine as meaning literally what they say. In this connection I may say that we can get a faint glimpse of the reasonable basis for such an institution as hell from the following fact. In all civilized countries there are prisons in which dangerous characters are incarcerated. They become a menace to civilization; hence it becomes necessary to place these lawless ones in a position so that they can no longer harm an organized, orderly, peaceful society. From this simple, little illustration we can see why it will be necessary for those who reject the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, trampling his bleeding, dying body under their unhalloved feet, to be relegated to some place so that they may not in any wise mar the happiness and the joy of those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and have surrendered to do His will.

We have seen from these passages, and could examine many others, that there is such a place as hell or future punishment. These verses which have been investigated do not determine the duration of the chastisement. All who are willing to receive the Biblical testimony are forced to accept the idea that the Scriptures do teach a place of future retribution. The duration of this suffering I will discuss in chapter six when I examine the force of the word translated "everlasting."

### III. THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

In the preceding section I discussed the Lord's ideas concerning quality goods and quality service. The element of quality, according to this parable, undoubtedly will be one of the factors determining the rewards that will be given to the servants of God. This discussion, however, would be incomplete if I did not look at two other determining factors. One of them is "the spirit in which one serves." This teaching is set forth in Matthew 19:16-20:16.

*A. The Occasion of the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard*

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20: 1-16) has been greatly misunderstood, because it has been interpreted apart from the occasion which called it forth. The circumstances under which our Lord gave this teaching must be understood clearly.

A young Jewish man, according to Matthew 19: 16, asked what good things he should do that he might inherit eternal life. It is evident from his question that he thought eternal life was contingent upon good works. In order to call forth an expression of his faith, the Lord Jesus asked why he called Him good. Then He exhorted him to keep the commandments if he wished to enter into life. To this declaration the young man replied, asking "which?" In answering our Lord referred to several of the commandments. Immediately in a spirit of justifying himself, the man insisted that he had kept all of the commandments from his youth up. In the same spirit he asked what he still lacked. Being able to see into the very depths of his soul, our Lord knew the young man's difficulty. Hence he said, "if thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." The young man having great possessions and not being surrendered to do God's will went away sorrowful.

Realizing his spiritual poverty, our Lord declared to His disciples in a most solemn manner: "it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19: 23, 24). This doctrine seemed very strange to the apostles, who in amazement asked "who then can be saved?" With haste Jesus replied that "with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." In his impulsive manner Peter spoke forth and said, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what then shall we have?" By this question the Apostle Peter was attempting to drive a bargain with the Lord relative to the reward of the future world. This point will become apparent as we study the parable itself, which was given to illustrate this query. To Peter's question the Lord replied "verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (vs. 28). In this promise our Lord assured the apostles that they,

His followers, would sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel during the period which He called "the regeneration when the son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory." In chapter six of this book we shall study more fully about "this throne of glory" upon which our Lord will be seated in the millennial age. To the apostles then the chief position of rulership and authority will be delegated. From Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 6: 1f it is clear that all Christians will reign with Christ over the earth during the millennium. This promise was also confirmed by our Lord's statement in Revelation 3:21. "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my father in his throne." In Revelation 20: 4 we are told that those who come with the Lord (19: 14) and the martyrs of the Tribulation period will reign with Christ a thousand years. From these passages it is clear that the saints of God will reign with the Lord during the thousand-year period mentioned in this chapter.

#### B. *The Details Concerning the Laborers in the Vineyard*

Being able to discern the motives of the heart, Jesus saw that there was more or less selfishness prompting the question propounded to Him by the Apostle Peter. There also was evidence that Peter had a dickering, bargaining spirit, otherwise he never would have asked this question. Our Lord dislikes very greatly the least taint of the commercial spirit in spiritual matters. Hence in the last two verses of Matthew 19 He said that there would be many who now are first but who will be last and vice versa. In order to explain what He meant He gave us the story of the laborers in the vineyard. That this parable is explanatory of the verses immediately preceding is evident from the fact that it is introduced by the conjunction "for." The promotion of some and the demotion of others at the coming of the Lord is illustrated by a householder who in the early morning hired laborers in his vineyard. With them he entered into a legal contract guaranteeing them a shilling a day for their labors. At the third, sixth, and ninth hours he likewise went out and employed others, assuring them that whatever was right he would pay. They trusted to his honor and integrity and were willing to let him determine the price. At the eleventh hour he also went out and seeing others idle asked why they had remained unemployed all day. To him

they replied that they had desired work but no one had employed them. Immediately he invited them to work for him.

At the end of the day the householder instructed his foreman to begin with those who had labored only one hour and to give each a shilling. The men were to be paid in reverse order of the time of their employment. Those who had entered into an iron-bound contract and had labored all day for a shilling received their pay. Immediately they began to complain against their employer, saying that he was partial and unjust with them. The master remonstrated, pointing to the fact that they had entered an agreement to work for a shilling a day. They had worked. Hence he was paying the price agreed upon. Therefore the householder reasoned with the laborers that he was doing them no injustice. If he chose to give the same amount to those with whom he had no agreement, that was his privilege. In acting thus he was not doing an injustice to those who had made a contract.

From this parable it becomes immediately evident that one of the great factors determining the reward each will receive is the spirit in which he serves. Through love we are to labor for the Lord. We know that He is loving and kind and will do for us far more exceedingly and abundantly above that which we can think or ask.

According to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, we are to do all things heartily as unto the Lord, not with eye service as men pleasers but as doing the will of the Lord from the heart. From this angle all toil, regardless of what it is, is lifted from the low level of menial labor to the high plane of delightful service for the Master's sake. From the parable of the talents we saw that quality goods and quality service were emphasized by our Lord. Here we see that the amount of our reward and the positions of trust and honor which we shall receive will be determined largely by the spirit in which we serve.

#### IV. THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

The study of the rewarding of the saints would not be complete apart from a brief discussion of the parable of the pounds set forth in Luke 19: 11-27. From this passage we see that a third element will enter into the determination of the rewards which each of God's servants will receive.

### A. *A Bird's-eye-view of the Parable*

We have already seen that there is one main point to be illustrated by each parable and that we are not to stress the details of any given one unless there is warrant in the context to justify such a procedure. There are, however, some parables which lengthen out almost into an allegory. Only the parable itself and its context can decide this matter. The parable of the pounds, as we shall see, is one of this type. Upon the surface it is evident that the details here have some significance.

#### 1. THE OCCASION OF THE PARABLE

Our Lord attended by great throngs was going up to Jerusalem the last time before His execution. In Luke 19: 1-10 we have a record of Zacchæus who longed to see the Lord Jesus and whose desire was granted. Christ did not disappoint him. Neither will He fail anyone. The occasion of which Luke speaks was the greatest day of this man's life.

For some reason the great multitude thronging Jesus came to the conclusion that, because He was drawing near to Jerusalem, the kingdom of God was immediately to appear (vs. 11).

"And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear."

For the reasons stated in this verse, Jesus gave us the parable of the pounds. Obviously the disciples connected His going to Jerusalem with the appearance of the kingdom of God. Why did they associate the establishment of the kingdom of God with His visit to Jerusalem? There evidently was a reason. A study of the gospel records shows that the people were in great expectation. Jesus had left Jerusalem and Judæa and had gone into the remoter regions of Galilee two years previously and had confined His ministry to the more distant sections of the land. The reason for His taking this action was the fact that there was great hostility against Him on the part of the leaders at Jerusalem. Contrary to His practice during these last two years, Jesus was going up to Jerusalem openly. What did He contemplate doing? Would He take the situation into His own mighty hands, overthrow the Roman government, and establish His kingdom in that city? These and similar questions doubtless entered the minds of all. Behind these questions there lies the more fundamental one: What grounds did the people have for connecting the appearance of the kingdom

of God with our Lord's going to Jerusalem? This question can be answered only by a study of the Old Testament prophets.

The kingdom of Israel is called "the kingdom of Jehovah over Israel" (I Chron. 28: 5). And David's throne is likewise called "the throne of Jehovah" in I Chronicles 29: 23. This "throne of Jehovah" was overthrown at the time of the Babylonian captivity and the "kingdom of Jehovah" was taken from Israel at the same time. Micah (3:9-12) saw the overturning of the throne of Jehovah and the taking of His kingdom. Following this sad announcement the prophet proclaimed the glad tidings of what he in a vision saw concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel and the establishment of the throne of Jehovah in Jerusalem. These predictions are found in Micah 4: 1-8. In his visions the prophet saw Jerusalem the metropolis of the earth and viewed the people of the world streaming thitherward in one continuous flow. Their object will be to worship Jehovah the God of Jacob who will be there. At that time universal peace will encircle the globe, and King Immanuel will be the one who arbitrates between the nations. The curse will be lifted and peace and joy will reign supremely. According to verses 6 and 7 the outcasts of Israel that have been driven from nation to nation will become a strong nation and "Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever." This prediction is followed by an apostrophe to the tower of the flock—the regal palace. Hear this great seer as he proclaims to Israel: "and thou, oh tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem."

The multitudes knew these predictions and entertained the hope of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel when Jehovah sits upon His throne in Jerusalem. At that time Jerusalem will be known as the "throne of Jehovah."

"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I gave for an inheritance unto your fathers" (Jer. 3: 17, 18).

## 2. DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Our Lord's going up to Jerusalem in the face of great opposition to Him evidently was interpreted by the throngs as positive

proof that He would overthrow the Roman authority, set up the ancient government of David, and mount the throne of Jehovah in the city of Jerusalem. Naturally, they interpreted His going there as the fulfilment of their expectations. To this position some may object that Jesus had foretold His rejection by the Jerusalem authorities. He made this revelation to the apostles but they did not understand it, for, according to Luke 18:34, "they understood none of these things; and this thing was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said." From this verse I gather that the Lord supernaturally veiled these things so that the apostles could not comprehend their full import. But to the multitudes Christ did not make the disclosure concerning His being rejected by the hierarchy at Jerusalem. Therefore they naturally expected Him to fulfill the predictions of the prophet at this time by restoring the kingdom to Israel. The multitudes entertained these hopes notwithstanding the fact that earlier (Matt. 13) Jesus had thoroughly explained the nature and character of the kingdom of heaven. Throughout His ministry He had foretold that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Before Him John made this same announcement. Their preaching was likewise confirmed by that of the twelve and later by that of the seventy. The kingdom of heaven did draw near just as John and Jesus announced and began with the sowing of the seed by "the sower who went forth to sow." It has been continuing through the intervening centuries and will terminate at the conclusion of this age as is indicated by the parable of the dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50). To correct the misapprehension in the popular mind Jesus spoke this parable.

But the kingdom\* of God is something entirely different. It is

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\* In an accommodated sense the church of Christ is called a kingdom.

"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18, 19).

In this context undoubtedly the church is called the kingdom. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) the Apostle Peter was given the honor of unlocking the kingdom to the Jews and later he opened it to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). While these statements are true, is any man prepared to say that those two events exhausted the meaning of this passage? It is more reasonable to think of these verses as being completely fulfilled at the second coming of our Lord when the kingdom of God will be fully established upon the earth and all opposition will be put down.

In Romans 14:16 the church of Jesus Christ again is called the kingdom of God in this limited, accommodative sense. Once more, Paul to the Colos-

the kingdom foretold in the Old Testament. In Luke 17:20-21 we are told that the Pharisees asked our Lord when the kingdom of God would appear. To this query He answered, "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, lo, here! or, there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." This passage cannot be interpreted as a reference to the church of Jesus Christ—the present, invisible, spiritual phase of the kingdom of God, for it was spoken to unregenerated Pharisees. From what we learn of them in the gospel records, we know that they were not regenerated, saved people. The Greek word translated "within" in many instances must, by the facts of the context, be rendered, as is given in the footnote of the Revised Version, "in the midst of." The Pharisees were expecting the coming of the kingdom of God. From Luke 2:38 it is evident that there was a considerable group of those who "were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." Among them was the prophetess Anna. To the Pharisees our Lord said that this kingdom for which the people were in expectation would not come in such a manner that its approach could be observed. On the contrary, it would be a sudden, catastrophic event.

That He was speaking of the cataclysmic change which will attend His second coming at which time He will establish the kingdom of God upon the earth is evident from the verses which follow the record of this conversation with the Pharisees. In 17:22 we are told that Jesus spoke to His disciples and said that the time would come when they would desire to see one of the days of the Son of man and would not be granted that privilege. In the following statement He declared that men of themselves would begin to prophesy concerning His coming, localizing the event by saying, "lo, there! lo, here!" Such predictions will be false for His

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sian brethren (Col. 1:13) spoke of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ as "the kingdom of the son of his love."

The church in other places (I Cor. 3:16, 17) is called the temple of God. This usage is a derived one. In the gospel records where we have the historic account of our Lord's earthly ministry, we frequently read of the temple where the sacrifices were offered. No one will interpret those passages as referring to the church but will understand that they refer to the building in Jerusalem where God was worshiped. After the Jews rejected Christ, the nation automatically lost her fellowship with God. The divine presence ceased to dwell in the temple, as in former days, but took up His abode in the hearts of the real believers, the regenerated ones. In view of this historic usage, the church became known as the temple of God. In its historic setting the church of Jesus Christ is also sometimes called the kingdom of God. The context must always be consulted.

coming can best be illustrated by the flashing of the lightning from one end of heaven to the other. Following this prophecy He spoke of the indifference, worldliness, and lack of spiritual light and life which will characterize the days when He returns. These facts show very conclusively that the expression, "the kingdom of God," here does not refer to the church but, on the contrary, is used as a designation of the kingdom which will be established at the second coming of our Lord.

In this rather long and seeming digression we have seen that the kingdom of God as presented by Luke in various passages evidently refers to the millennial kingdom of our Lord. Returning let us look at the original passage under consideration (Luke 19: 11-27). The multitude believed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. Enthusiasm and excitement were running high. The masses were expecting the Lord, upon His arrival at Jerusalem, to bring about the catastrophic event which would usher in His earthly kingdom. In order to disabuse their minds of this error, He spoke the parable of the pounds to which I will now give special attention.

#### B. *Detailed Examination*

The parable employed by our Lord to correct the erroneous impression in the minds of the multitudes is "the parable of the pounds." The details of this illustration are as follows: There was a certain nobleman who went into a far country to obtain a kingdom and to return. Before making his departure, however, it was necessary for him to deliver his goods, property, and money into the hands of faithful men who could carry on his work and look after his interests during his absence. Naturally, he chose those whom he already had in his employ. Therefore he apportioned to them their several duties and distributed to them his funds in order that they might invest them to advantage. To each he gave a pound with the instructions that they should trade "herewith until I come." Immediately he took his departure and went into the far country to receive his kingdom. Having obtained the authority to rule, he returned to his country and to the estate. Immediately upon his arrival he called the servants in order that they might give an account of their stewardship. The first called had been very diligent and gained ten pounds with his one; the second had gained five pounds; and the third, not having his master's interest at heart but being slothful, buried the money and

made no attempt to invest it. Hence he brought only the pound which had been entrusted to him. To the one who had gained ten pounds the master gave him authority to reign over ten cities of his kingdom; upon the one having gained five, the honor of reigning over five cities was conferred; but to the one who did nothing, even the pound which had been entrusted to him was given to the one who had gained ten. Hence this one had additional honor. The nobleman cast the slothful servant out of his employ. Having announced the rewards which the faithful servants would receive, the nobleman dealt drastically with his enemies—slaying them.

Though the parable ends with this event, manifestly we are to conclude that the nobleman, having performed the first duties under his newly acquired authority—the removal of all possibility of a revolt—inaugurates his government and grants to the faithful servants the privilege of reigning over various cities in his kingdom. Furthermore, the parable demands that we understand that the nobleman reigns over a kingdom in the very place where his enemies have been.

The similarity between the parable and the circumstances connected with Herod the Great's obtaining from the Roman emperor the right to reign over Judæa suggests the strong probabilities that Jesus used that historical occurrence to illustrate the events connected with His return to heaven in order to receive the kingdom and to return. A familiarity with the historical narrative as contained in Josephus will throw this parable into bold relief. What were the circumstances?

Herod the Great, being part Jew and part Idumean, was very obnoxious to the Jews. Nevertheless he was ambitious to reign over Palestine. He was a shrewd, conniving politician, who left no stone unturned in order to accomplish his ends; hence at a time which seemed to promise him the possibility of reigning over the Jews, he began negotiations with the Roman Cæsar to obtain the power. In due course of time he felt that it was necessary for him to make a journey to Rome for personal conference with the emperor. Upon his leaving, the Jewish authorities immediately sent a delegation to Rome protesting against Herod's appointment as a puppet king over the nation. Finally, after much diplomatic parley and political intrigue, Herod was granted the authority to become king of the Jewish nation. Of course, before he made his journey he turned over to his servants all of his property. Having obtained the right to rule, he returned to Palestine, destroyed all

his leading opponents, inaugurated his régime, and conferred upon his faithful servants positions of honor and trust.

This incident of the past was, doubtless, familiar to the multitudes of people to whom Jesus spoke. Of course, He omitted from His parable the intriguing and the diplomatic maneuvers of the original story. He built it upon the general outline of the circumstances with which the audience was familiar. His design in speaking this parable was to show them that, though He was going to Jerusalem, He would be opposed by the authorities, would be forced to leave this earth and return to heaven in order to receive the kingdom. The kingdom, therefore, for which they were in expectation would not be established at that time. That eventually He will receive it from a higher authority than the Jerusalem hierarchy and will establish it upon the earth is self-evident. When He does, the servants—the Christians—will be given positions of glory, authority, and power in that reign.

#### 1. THE NOBLEMAN

In order that we may see that the outline of events as set forth in the preceding paragraph is correct, we must notice every item of the parable. The nobleman stands out prominently in the illustrative story. This man, being unacceptable to the citizens of the country, leaves home and goes to a far country in order to receive authority to reign in his homeland. Obviously, this nobleman is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke this parable. Since the people thought that He would be accepted by the authorities upon His arrival in Jerusalem, the multitudes felt that certainly the leaders there would be in favor of our Lord's reigning and would join Him in throwing off the Roman yoke. To correct this erroneous impression He spoke of Himself simply as a nobleman who was desirous of reigning but who was to be rejected by the leaders. About this position I do not think that there can be any doubt.

#### 2. THE FAR COUNTRY

The far country to which the nobleman went undoubtedly is heaven. Where "the heaven of heavens" is, no one can say, but there is some place in the universe which can be called "the immediate presence of God." It is true that He is an all-pervading Spirit—the omnipresent One. At the same time the Scriptures speak of the throne of God in heaven; hence we are to conclude

that there is some place in the universe where God is in a special and individual sense. From the facts of the parable then, it is evident that this far country to which the nobleman goes is the place which is called the immediate presence of God.

### 3. THE SERVANTS

As Herod delivered to his servants his property and goods with the charge that they should look after his interests, so our Lord has servants whom He has appointed to look after His interests and to manage His work during His absence. From His many disciples He chose twelve to be Apostles. They were given instructions how to carry on His work. According to the gospel records and also the first chapter of Acts, we see that they were to tarry in Jerusalem until the Spirit of God should come upon them. Then they were to begin their ministry of testimony to the saving power and grace of the Lord Jesus. They were faithful to their charge. The responsibility connected with the work of the kingdom they intrusted to others—to the succeeding generations. The Apostle Paul urged Timothy, saying, "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:3). From these facts it is evident that the Christians today are the "servants" of the parable as well as the Christians of the first generation and the intervening centuries.

### 4. THE SERVANTS AT WORK

As in the parable, so in that which is signified by it. Some of the servants were faithful, whereas one was not. Some servants are more diligent and faithful than others. Thus it is with Christians of all centuries; some realize their responsibilities and are faithful one hundred per cent to their absent Lord, whereas there are others who are real, genuine servants but who do not realize the responsibilities resting upon them.

All of the servants are placed on the same footing. This parable differs from that of the talents. According to this latter parable, to each one goods were delivered according to his several ability. Not so with the parable of the pounds. Each is given a pound and is expected to be faithful and to gain ten pounds. I am on the same footing with every Christian regardless of whether or not he is engaged in the ministry. All I have is one pound; all anyone has is one pound. Each one is expected to use that

which he has, being faithful one hundred per cent. Our Lord revealed the fact that some would thus feel their responsibility and discharge their obligations, whereas others would not be so diligent as these. Many Christians do not take their Christianity seriously. They are excellent people but they do not see the importance of living for God seven days out of each week and working for Him.

Each man is to be rewarded according to His work. In this life a man can labor and store up treasures for his son. Upon the death of the father the son enters into possession of his wealth. Hence he reaps what he has not sown. Not so in spiritual matters. The Lord will have a strict reckoning with everyone of His servants. The reward which I receive in eternity will be determined by the actual work which I have accomplished. What I do must result in permanent assets to the kingdom of God. This phase of the truth is set forth by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3. There is but one foundation upon which man can build, which is Jesus Christ. If I build thereupon wood, hay, stubble, it will be destroyed and I shall receive no reward for my efforts. On the other hand, if I place upon that one imperishable foundation gold, silver, precious stones, they will stand the test of fire and I shall receive a reward for my services. Let me emphasize, in this connection, that the Scriptures constantly stress the thought that each man will be rewarded according to his labors.

##### 5. THE RETURN OF THE NOBLEMAN

The nobleman, having received the kingdom in the far country, returns and has a reckoning with his servants. The wording of the promise here is such that we are to conclude that, when the nobleman receives the kingdom, he returns immediately. He goes specifically to the far country to receive the kingdom. Having accomplished his objective, Jesus said he returns. It would indeed be preposterous to think that he received the kingdom immediately upon his arrival in the far country and waits a long time before he returns. Such an idea as that does not fit into the context of the passage. The people were expecting the immediate appearance of the kingdom of God. To correct this expectancy our Lord said that the case would be exactly opposite. The nobleman must go into the far country to get the kingdom. His use of the words, "far country," naturally indicated to the minds of the multitude that it would be some time before he would receive the kingdom. His statement, "having received the kingdom, he

returned," carries the obvious truth that upon his receiving the authority to reign, he returns.

This same thought is set forth in Daniel 7:13, 14. In this passage we see "one like unto a son of man" ushered into the presence of "the Ancient of days" who is sitting upon the throne. To Him is granted an everlasting, world-wide kingdom. But, the question arises, When is the "one like unto a son of man," who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, brought into the presence of "the Ancient of days"? This question can be answered only by a study of the preceding vision found in verses 9-12. In this passage, we see "the Ancient of days" seated upon the throne of judgment and pronouncing a decision against the last world-emperor who will be at the time hurling blasphemies and defiance against God Almighty. After this decision is rendered by the Judge of the supreme court of the universe, then, and only then, is this one "like unto a son of man" brought into the court room, attended by many angels. At that time He receives the right to reign upon the earth. In view of all these facts, it is abundantly evident that the Son of man will not receive the right to reign until "the Ancient of days" sits upon the throne of judgment in heaven and renders the decision against the last world emperor. When He thus receives this authority, He returns to the earth to put into execution His rights and prerogatives as King of the world. This becomes immediately apparent when we study the explanation of the vision of Daniel 7 given by the angel in verses 15-28.

#### 6. THE REWARDING OF THE SERVANTS

When Herod returned from Rome, he suppressed all possibility of revolt, established his authority over Palestine, and conferred upon his faithful servants positions of dignity, honor, and authority. So will it be with our Lord. When He returns to this earth and ascends the throne of David in Mount Zion, He will allot to His faithful servants their positions of reigning with Him—each one according to his work and faithfulness.

We have already seen that at the rapture of the church the saints are caught up to be with the Lord and that they will be rewarded when they come before the judgment seat of Christ. Finally, the Lord comes to the earth at the end of the Tribulation and slays all of His enemies and sets up His world-wide reign of righteousness and peace.

In order that there might be such a reign of righteousness upon the earth, when everyone receives a just deal, those who administer the affairs of government must be absolutely righteous in the strict sense of the term. According to the teaching of this and other passages, those who have been regenerated, saved, and redeemed will reign with our Lord and will administer this glorious millennial government among the peoples of the earth. This golden era is the one of which God has spoken through the various prophets and the one for which the world is yearning and longing. May it hastily come!

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING NATIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

**I**N ORDER to understand properly the teaching of Matthew 25: 31-46, one must, as has already been set forth, keep in mind clearly the occasion of the discourse. In this connection, therefore, it becomes necessary for me to review the historical setting.

Our Lord foretold the destruction of the temple. That prediction immediately suggested to the apostles' minds the forecast of the closing scenes of the present age and the introduction of the millennial kingdom as set forth in such passages as Zechariah 14. In this chapter the prophet depicted very clearly the final scenes at Jerusalem in the day of Jehovah, the fall of the city, the sudden appearance of the Lord upon mount Zion, the conclusion of the present age, and the establishment of the glorious kingdom of God upon earth. Misunderstanding His prediction, which was fulfilled in 70 A. D., they thought that He was speaking of the final collapse of the Jewish nation in the day of Jehovah. Hence they asked Him about His coming and the fulfilment of Zechariah 14 when His feet will stand upon the mount of Olives. Immediately after that event He will establish the kingdom of God upon the earth. Such a vision loomed before the apostles' minds and brought forth these questions. Practically all of the discourse, as we have already seen, thus far has focused attention upon the sign of the end of the age, the Great Tribulation, the coming of the Lord for His saints, and His rewarding them. Indeed it would be strange if our Lord had stopped His prediction and had told us nothing concerning the establishment of His earthly kingdom in fulfilment of Old Testament forecast. In fact, the discourse would have been incomplete and unsatisfying. Praise to the Lord, He always gives that which meets one's needs and satisfies.

The discussion of the judgment of the nations and the establishment of the kingdom is begun by the disjunctive conjunction *but*. This connective throws this verse over against that which has preceded. What is that? As has already been seen, Matthew 24: 32 begins a discussion of the rapture of the church. This

subject occupies all of our Lord's attention from 24: 32-25: 30. We must therefore conclude that the coming of the Son of man referred to in Matthew 25: 31 is thrown over against His coming for His saints as set forth in this block of Scripture. With this general survey of the rapture and the tribulation, we are ready to examine the records more minutely.

### I. TIME OF THE JUDGMENT

"But when the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon the throne of his glory. . ." (vs. 31).

To what coming does this verse refer? Undoubtedly the event mentioned in Matthew 24: 30, which will occur immediately after the tribulation discussed in the preceding verses. At that time the Lord will come with power and great glory. Since this verse speaks of His coming in glory with the angels, it is evident that the same event is the subject of consideration. In view of the setting of the entire discourse, we may be certain that this coming is the one referred to by Zechariah at the conclusion of the great day of Jehovah when God in the person of King Messiah will descend from heaven and His feet will stand in that day upon the mount of Olives.

In the discussion we have already learned that the Great Tribulation proper continues for three and one-half years—the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. Since the Lord's coming in glory follows immediately the conclusion of the Tribulation, we may know that the coming at the time of this judgment is three and one-half years after the setting up of the image of the beast in the temple at Jerusalem.

### II. THE THRONE OF GLORY

When the Son of man comes in His glory, He will sit upon the throne of His glory. What is the significance of this expression? What would the disciples understand by this statement? Since our Lord did not go into a discussion of this throne of glory, it is evident that He presupposed on their part a knowledge concerning it. In order for us to understand it properly, we shall have to investigate it in the Old Testament with which the Apostles were versed. The first mention of this throne is found in 1 Samuel 2: 1-10—Hannah's prayer. In verses 1 and 2 she praised God for His wonderful providential acts and for His

answering prayer. Then she warned the proud and haughty to humble themselves before the Lord (vs. 3). In verses 4-8 she interpreted God's dealings with humanity through the centuries and showed that He is working toward an objective in a great future age when the poor, humble, and trusting ones will be raised up to sit with princes and to inherit the throne of glory.

"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,  
He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill,  
To make them sit with princes,  
And inherit the throne of glory:  
For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's,  
And he hath set the world upon them" (vs. 8).

Following this verse we see a promise that the Lord will preserve His saints during a time of tribulation at the end of which He will come to fight against all the wicked (see vs. 10). Then He will judge the ends of the earth and will give strength to His King, who is none other than His anointed, the Messiah. In this song, therefore, we have a divine interpretation of the philosophy of history. God is working all things toward one common end—namely, the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth over which King Messiah will reign. The throne of this kingdom is here called the throne of glory.

Another reference to the throne of glory is found in Jeremiah 14:21: "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember break not thy covenant with us." The sermon of which this verse is a part was delivered by the prophet concerning a terrible drought that had come upon the land. In concluding his message the prophet prayed to God not to abhor the Jewish people for the sake of the divine Name. Furthermore, he earnestly pled with the Almighty not to disgrace the throne of His glory. God had promised Israel that if she would be faithful and obedient to Him, He would give her rain in the proper season. According to His promise in Deuteronomy 11:13-17, He would send the rains in the proper seasons and would give Israel bountiful crops upon the condition of her obedience and faithfulness to Him. Israel made the claim that Jehovah, her God, is the Almighty who controls nature as well as nations. When the land of Israel was smitten with drought, the heathen would naturally come to the conclusion that Jehovah had no control over the rain; otherwise He would not permit such a calamity. The only possible alternative to this position was that God was displeased with His people. It is more likely that the

heathen would reach the former conclusion. The honor and the dignity with which the name of God was held among the pagans would, according to Jeremiah's conception, be contingent upon the perpetuity and the power of the Davidic throne. A severe drought over the entire country for several years, at least, would impoverish the nation and would result in its final overthrow by enemies. Therefore the prophet pled with the Lord not to abhor the throne of His glory, i. e., the Davidic throne.

If one will read Leviticus 26: 3-13, he will see that the Lord in placing the chosen people in the Holy Land desired to make an ideal country of it and a holy nation of Israel. Upon the condition that the people would be faithful and true to Him, He promised exemption from disease, freedom from invasion, and abundance of the necessities of life. The nations surrounding her would look upon the land and its inhabitants as a people ideally located and blessed and would be led to seek God and His knowledge. Thus in the divine plan the land and the people of Israel were to be a model for the nations. But Israel would not be obedient. She was rebellious continually; hence God could not shower His blessings upon her. He was forced to withhold the rain, to permit foreign invasion, and to cause droughts, all of which calamities sooner or later broke the power of the nation and brought the final overthrow of the Davidic throne and kingdom.

In the third chapter of Jeremiah appears one of the most profound predictions to be found in the Old Testament. In verses 1-18 the prophet pled with backsliding Israel and treacherous Judah to return to the Lord with all of their hearts. This exhortation was concluded with a discourse concerning the future kingdom.

"And it shall come to pass, when ye are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah; neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they miss it; neither shall it be made any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I gave for an inheritance unto your fathers" (Jer. 3: 16-18).

This prediction declares that the time will come when all the tribes of Israel will return to the Lord and when Jerusalem will be called the throne of Jehovah. The language must be taken at its primary, ordinary, literal, usual significance. There is nothing in the

context to indicate otherwise. Accordingly, then, this passage is the forecast of the time when Jehovah's throne will be established in the city of Jerusalem and all the nations will gather there to worship the Lord. This Jehovah enthroned in Jerusalem is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Messiah and Saviour of the world.

Since in the Old Testament the throne of David was called the throne of glory and since the Apostles at the time of the delivery of the Olivet discourse were thinking in terms of the Old Testament teaching, obviously then the expression, "the throne of his glory," can refer to nothing else but the Davidic throne upon which our Lord will take His seat at His return in glory.

### III. THE PEOPLE JUDGED

When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, "before him all the nations shall be gathered, and he will separate them one from the other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. . . ." The question arising at this point is, Who are here referred to as "the nations"? Since this prediction is the forecast of our Lord's return to the earth at the conclusion of the tribulation period, the nations here mentioned can be none other than those peoples who survive the Great Tribulation. This interpretation is demanded by the facts of the context. The word *nation* always refers to people in the flesh and never to departed spirits. Since such is the ordinary meaning, we are forced to accept this signification for the term unless there is positive evidence pointing otherwise. In view of the fact that there are no negative indications, we must accept this term as referring to those nations that survive the ordeal of the day of Jehovah.

That there will be people who pass through the Great Tribulation and who will be upon the earth when our Lord returns is evident from a close study of Isaiah 24. Without doubt the destruction of the world's civilization is clearly set forth in verse 1: "Behold, Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." A comparison of this verse with Jeremiah 4:23-31 proves conclusively that both prophets saw in vision the complete destruction of earth's civilization in the day of Jehovah. Some expositors, however, have seen in Jeremiah 4:23-26 a reference to the destruction of the earth which is narrated in Genesis 1:2. The thing leading them to this conclusion is the fact that both

Moses in Genesis 1:2 and Jeremiah in 4:23 used the same words in the original language, translated "waste and void." This identification will not stand the crucial test of the facts presented by Jeremiah in this connection. After painting the picture of desolation seen in the vision, the prophet explained this revelation in verses 27-31 and introduced his explication by the use of the conjunction *for*. A casual study of verses 27-31 shows that he was speaking about the period of travail through which Zion shall yet pass in the future. Since these verses have a forward look to the day of the Lord and since they are explanatory of the vision described in verses 23-26, obviously the desolation described in these latter verses is that which will be wrought during the time of Zion's travail.

According to Isaiah 24:2, all the people upon the earth will share alike these purging ordeals. In verse 5 we are told the reason why God sends these destructive judgments—namely, the thorough moral pollution of the inhabitants of the world and the breakdown of all law. According to verse 6, the bulk of earth's population will be destroyed at that time. In verses 7-13 we have a vivid description of the intense suffering through which those people who survive the Tribulation will be called to pass.

In verses 14-16a we see that even the dark clouds of the Great Tribulation have a silver lining. In these verses we find a vivid prediction of the mighty revival that will sweep the earth during that time of sorrow and distress. In this connection let me say that this spiritual awakening, since it is in the midst of the Great Tribulation, is undoubtedly the one described in Revelation 7 which likewise is placed in the midst of the judgments of the Tribulation. In the Revelation passage it is to be noted that the Jewish evangelists are the ones who bring about this mighty turning to God.

In the paragraph beginning with 16b and continuing to verse 20 we have the prediction of the great upheavals and changes that will take place in the physical realm. The powers of the heavens at that time will be shaken, the earth will be rent violently, rock to and fro like a hammock, and stagger like a drunken man. This description is to be taken literally since there are no indications in the context that the language is to be interpreted figuratively.

According to verses 21 and 22 the host of the high ones on high (evil spirits) and the kings of the earth upon the earth will be gathered together and incarcerated in the pit of the abyss

where they will be confined "for many days." During the imprisonment of these diabolical spirits and wicked, rebellious rulers of the world, the Lord God will reign in Zion and before His elders there will be glory. Over whom will He reign when He sits in majesty in Jerusalem? There can be but one answer: the God-fearing remnant of the "few men" (vs. 6) who survive this Tribulation.

Since our Lord in the Olivet discourse (Matt. 24:9-28) was describing the horrors of the Great Tribulation, of which Isaiah was undoubtedly speaking, the nations who will be brought before the Lord Jesus when He sits upon the throne can be none other than the few men who survive the Tribulation and to whom Isaiah referred.

#### IV. THE KING

"Then the King will say to those on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (vs. 34).

Who is this king? Only one answer is possible: the Son of man who sits upon the throne of His glory. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ is none other than the King. When He was born, the wisemen came from the East, looking for Him who was born "King of the Jews." That the Lord Jesus Christ is this King is evident from the Book of Immanuel (Isa. 7-12). In Isaiah 7:14 we find a prediction of the virgin birth of the Messiah; then in 9:6, 7 appears a statement of His wonderful character and of His mounting the throne of David:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this."

Note, in the quotation above, the government is to be upon the shoulder of this child, who is thus miraculously born to Israel. The government of what? What did Isaiah's auditors understand by this prediction? The government of Judæa, of course. This interpretation is confirmed by verse 7 which declares "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from hence-

forth even for ever." According to this prediction, then, the King upon the Jewish throne is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

In conformity with this promise is that which was given by the angel Gabriel to Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus in the following quotation:

"And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David\*: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1: 31-33).

\*Some expositors have understood Peter's language uttered on the day of Pentecost to be proof of Christ's sitting upon the throne of David at the present time. In Acts 2: 22 Peter declared that God wrought wonderful signs through the Lord Jesus in order to attest His divine commission. According to verse 23 Jesus was delivered into the hands of those who executed Him by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Peter charged his auditors with the crime of the death of the Lord Jesus. What they did, however, was simply the carrying out of God's plan and purpose. Though He was slain, death could not hold Him, because David in the Sixteenth Psalm foresaw the resurrection of Messiah. In the verses which Peter quoted, David, the human author, used the personal pronouns, *I*, *me*, and *my*. To the superficial student this passage referred to David's own experience. Peter corrects this error in verse 29 by showing that David died and was buried and that his tomb remained until that day. Therefore, argued Peter, though David did use the personal pronouns of the first person, he was not speaking of his own experiences. Being a prophet he used the regular method of prophetic utterance, declared Peter. It was necessary that the Lord Jesus be raised from the tomb in order to carry out the program which was laid down in the Old Testament Scriptures. David, foreseeing the entire redemptive career of Messiah, showed that His resurrection was involved in this plan of God. Had our Lord remained in the tomb, the promise concerning David's seed and his sitting upon the throne for ever would have become null and void, argued Peter. "He (David) foreseeing *this* spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption" (Acts 2: 30). These verses have been interpreted as an affirmation that Christ now is upon the throne of David. This view is erroneous. All the passage says is that David foreseeing that Christ would sit upon his throne gave this oracle concerning the resurrection. This statement is far from saying that Christ is now on David's throne. David's throne was in Jerusalem. Christ at the present time is at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In no sense can the throne upon which the Lord Jesus is now seated be called David's throne. Verses 24-32 are devoted to proving that Messiah whom the Jews slew by the hands of lawless men was raised from the dead.

The objectors could reasonably have demanded of Peter that Jesus come forth and stand in their presence if He were raised from the dead. In anticipation of this opposition the Apostle declared that Jesus was not here upon earth but that He was seated at the right hand of the throne of God according to the prediction found in Psalm 110: "Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (vss. 1, 2). This psalm outlines the entire redemptive career of Messiah. According to it, Messiah comes to the Jewish nation and is rejected by the people of Israel. At the invitation of God He ascends to heaven and

Isaiah told his auditors that their eyes would "see the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33: 17). Following this quotation is a matchless description of Jerusalem as it will be when Messiah reigns there in glory. Under His régime there will be no more war. According to verse 22 of this chapter, Israel will declare, "Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us." Another beautiful picture of King Messiah's reigning in Jerusalem over the entire earth is set forth in Zephaniah's prophecy:

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel: be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Jehovah hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even Jehovah, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not fear evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; O Zion, let not thy hands be slack. Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3: 14-17).

From these quotations, and many others which could be given, we get a clear-cut picture of King Messiah when He will sit upon the throne of His glory and reign over the world. All of these passages were, doubtless, familiar to the Apostles; hence, when our Lord spoke of His sitting upon the throne of His glory and of His being the King, the disciples readily understood the import of His language. Obviously, one sees from these facts that Jesus assumed, on the part of the disciples, the knowledge set forth in the Old Testament.

## V. THE BASIS OF THE JUDGMENT

As set forth in Matthew 25: 34-44, the basis for the judgment here depicted is that of good works. Those put upon the right hand are placed there because they have been good and kind to His brethren, whereas those placed upon the left are thus separated from the others because of their failure to perform hospitable acts toward His brethren. These facts show that the basis

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takes His seat at the right hand of the majesty on high. It is clear from Peter's argument that he was outlining this course as set forth by the Old Testament prophets. This much of Messiah's redemptive career, declared Peter, had been fulfilled. In order to see the remaining part, one must study Psalm 110. By reading verse 2 he sees that, when God has put the Jewish people under Messiah's feet, the latter will come and reign in Zion. Zion is the poetical name for Jerusalem. Messiah's reigning upon the throne of David, therefore, is something yet in the future—when Israel accepts Him as her Messiah. Therefore in no sense can one say that Christ at the present time is upon the throne of David.

of the judgment of the living nations at the coming of our Lord is that of good works and charitable deeds.

In vain one seeks in this passage for even the slightest intimation of accepting or rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour on the part of the ones judged. For the popular idea of a general judgment into which all the dead of the ages will be brought—the usual interpretation of this passage—there is absolutely no warrant. Nowhere in the passage is there the least hint of a resurrection of the dead. It is, therefore, safest to accept the words at their face value and to believe and interpret this judgment scene as that of the living nations who will be separated upon the basis of good works.

## VI. THE KINGDOM PREPARED FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

To those on the right hand, the King will say "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." From this verse we learn that there has been prepared from the foundation of the world a kingdom into which those who are put on the right hand of the Messiah will enter. In order to understand this passage we must analyze the various terms.

### A. *The Foundation of the World*

What is meant by the expression "foundation of the world"? The verbal form of the word translated *foundation*, according to Thayer, is "to cast down; to throw to the ground, prostrate; and to put in a lower place." Thayer defines the substantive form as, first, "throwing or laying down," and secondly, "a founding (laying down a foundation\*)."

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\* Some, ignoring the fundamental rules of lexicography and grammar, have sought to restrict both the verbal and substantive forms of this word to the primary, inherent meaning of "casting down." Thus this word has been understood by this group to signify "a disruption," "a catastrophe." All words have a primary and, usually, a secondary or derived definitions. Whenever the meaning of a given word in a certain context is sought that signification must be accepted which will accord with all the facts of the context. The presumption, however, is that each word is to be taken at its primary meaning if the context permits. To discard secondary and derived imports of words and to adhere strictly to the primary meaning irrespective of the facts of the context is to pursue a course which violates every rule of lexicography and common-sense interpretation; hence to translate this word when connected with the earth as a disruption of the world irrespective of the facts of the context is a violation of the fundamental rules of lexicography, grammar, and interpretation.

In several passages the inspired writers used the substantive form of this word in connection with "world." For instance, in the following references we have this phrase "from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Lu. 11:50; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). The expression, "before the foundation of the world," appears in such passages as John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; and 1 Peter 1:20. The first of these phrases is used in connection with statements relative to earthly affairs from the time of the creation of the world and subsequently. The latter one focuses attention upon that part of eternity which antedated the Creation. The record of the Creation of the universe is found in the sublime statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Back in that part of eternity which Moses called "In the beginning," God spoke the universe into existence. With the creation of the physical realm, what men call "time" began.

According to our Lord's statement, this kingdom over which the Messiah will reign was prepared from the foundation of the world. What is the significance of this statement? In what way was it prepared before the foundation of the world? There can be only one answer—namely, in God's eternal plan provision was made for this kingdom. Though the statement affirms that this kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world, by the language we are not to understand that only at the time of the creation of the world God planned it. Passages which use this phrase, "from the foundation of the world," trace back the thing under discussion to the Creation but do not exclude the possibility of its existence prior to the Creation—going back into the eternal counsels of the Almighty.

### B. *The Plan of the Ages*

In Ephesians 3:11 the Apostle Paul speaks of the Lord's "eternal purpose" or, as indicated in the footnote, "purpose of the ages." From one angle we may speak of all eternity as being divided into three sections: that which antedated the Creation, designated in Genesis 1:1 as "In the beginning"; secondly, time which began with Creation and continues until the destruction of the millennial heavens and earth, which event immediately precedes the creation of the eternal heavens and the eternal earth; thirdly, the ages of the ages which begin with the creation of the new order and continue for ever and ever.

The period which we call time is properly divided into ages or eras. Viewing human history from the standpoint of redemption, some students divide it into the following dispensations: innocence, conscience, civil government, promise, law, grace, and the millennium. The age of innocence was, of course, the period during which man was in the Garden of Eden before the fall. The age of conscience immediately followed that event and continued up to the time of the flood. After the deluge God authorized human governments; hence they were chartered at that time. Things moved on for four hundred and twenty-seven years, according to the chronology supplied in the book of Genesis, to the promise. From the making of the covenant with Abraham to the giving of the law at Sinai was the age of promise. It was at Sinai that God gave His law which was a forward step in the unfolding of His plan; hence the law dispensation was introduced at Sinai and continued to the Cross. When our Lord made the atonement for us, He unfolded the plan of God further by introducing the age of grace—the period during which we are now living. When He returns in glory at the end of the Tribulation, He will introduce the glorious kingdom age which is commonly known as the millennium. At the conclusion of this era of peace, Satan will be loosed for a little season, immediately after which the millennial heavens and the millennial earth will pass away. Following that event will come the eternity of the future—the new heavens and the new earth.

Frequently in the Hebrew and also in the Greek we come across the expression *ages* which in certain contexts means *dispensations*. In the New Testament several times we read of this age and the one to come. This former expression refers to the present Christian dispensation, which is to be followed by the millennium. Each context, however, must be taken into consideration.

### C. *The Dispensation of the Fulness of the Times*

In Ephesians 1:3-14 the Apostle Paul in one profound sentence sets forth God's eternal plan and purpose which culminates in a "dispensation of the fulness of the times" when God will sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth." Evidence corroborating this statement is to be found in Hebrews 1:3 where it is said of Christ that He is "upholding all things by the word of his power." The Greek word carries the idea in this context of activity, of pressing onward toward a

goal. Wescott in his commentary on *Hebrews* quotes approvingly the following statement: "For the Son is not an Atlas sustaining the dead weight of the world." To this sentiment he adds, "It rather expresses that 'bearing' which includes movement, progress, towards an end." In the millennial age our Lord Jesus Christ will sum up everything in Himself. He will be, as Isaiah said, Judge, Lawgiver, and King. In the future kingdom age the Lord Jesus will reign until He has put all enemies under His feet, and the last one to be conquered will be Death. Then He will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. Hence the millennial age is the dispensation which is called "the fulness of the times." Towards that glorious consummation the Lord Jesus is bearing all things. Therefore this kingdom of the thousand years duration is the one to which reference was made by our Lord when He said that it had been prepared from the foundation of the world.

## VII. THE SHEEP

According to our Lord's prediction, those represented by the sheep are the ones who have been kind to His brethren. They will be permitted to enter that kingdom.

As stated above, the one condition of entrance is that of good works toward His brethren. For us to read into this passage something else is to do violence to the Scriptures. But further light is to be found when this passage is read in the light of such a passage as Psalm 24 which gives us a picture of our Lord's establishing His glorious reign in Zion. In verses 1 and 2 of this psalm the inspired writer declared that the Lord is the owner of the universe, for it is His by creation. Following this affirmation the question is raised:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?"

The expression, "hill of Jehovah," must be understood in the light of its usage in David's time, for he wrote this psalm, as is indicated by the superscription. According to Acts 4:25, he was also the inspired author of Psalm 2. In the sixth verse of this latter passage God declared:

"Yet I have set my king  
Upon my holy hill of Zion."

Mount Zion in the southeastern portion of the city of Jerusalem is called God's holy hill, i. e., the hill of Jehovah; hence when

the question is asked in Psalm 24: 3, "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah?" we are to understand that the temple area is meant. This passage presupposes that Jehovah will be there in Mount Zion; hence the writer asks who will be permitted to come up into His presence and to stand there, i. e., to be acceptable to Him.

The question is answered in verse 4,

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;  
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood,  
And hath not sworn deceitfully."

We must be careful to take this language at what it says and must avoid reading back into it pure New Testament conceptions. Those who will stand approved, according to this verse, in the presence of the Lord are those who have maintained a strict, pure, moral life. From this passage are we to conclude that one's morality and selfrighteousness will save him? Not at all. This question is answered in the fifth verse,

"He shall receive a blessing from Jehovah,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation."

Those of the surviving nations who come before the presence of the Lord—who are gathered before Him when He separates the living nations—will see the light and the truth with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ and will accept Him. Then to them He will give His righteousness. They will be clothed therefore in the righteousness of Christ on account of their full-hearted surrender to Him. Psalm 24, therefore, gives us information supplemental to that found in Matthew 25: 31-46.

#### VIII. THE GOATS

Those placed upon the left hand are the ones who have been inconsiderate toward our Lord's brethren. From the language of Jesus we may safely conclude that their actions are but overt expressions of their hearts toward Him. Because of an adverse attitude and a rebellious spirit toward Him, they refuse to do anything for His brethren during the trials of the Great Tribulation. Because of this fact they are rejected and go off into everlasting punishment.

#### IX. ETERNAL LIFE AND ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

The subjects concerning eternal life and future punishment are of such vital importance that it is necessary to investigate thoroughly the significance of the word rendered "everlasting."

In the discussion of the parable of the talents I called attention to the fact that the unfaithful servant was cast into outer darkness where there was weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. In that investigation I showed that, according to the Scriptures, there is a place of punishment to which the wicked are to be assigned.

Although the doctrine of future punishment is very unpopular, the faithful servant of God must in love declare the Biblical teaching on this point regardless of all consequences. A failure to give the Scriptural emphasis to this most important doctrine is doubtless the fundamental reason for the laxity that exists in the world today. Men must be moved by the motive of fear as well as by the impulse of love. Many admit punishment in the future but deny that it is of eternal duration. Those taking this position place strained and unnatural meanings upon the word translated "everlasting." What is the Scriptural teaching concerning everlasting punishment?

Before we can decide the duration of eternal life and this future punishment we must study carefully the various words, phrases, and statements which are used in connection with the teaching concerning them.

#### A. *Significance of the Adjective *Aiōnios**

Thayer in defining the word *aiōnios* gives as its first meaning "without beginning or end, that which always has been and always will be." As proof of this definition he makes reference to Romans 16: 25f,

"Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 15: 25-27).

From the quotation above it is clear that the self-existing God, who has always been, who is, and who will continue to exist for ever, is here called the *Aiōnios* God. The expression is correctly translated in this passage "the eternal God." Since this adjective carries the idea of time and since it is modifying "God," it can here have but one meaning, i. e., *everlasting*—from all eternity in the past, throughout all eternity of the future.

In Hebrews 9: 11-14 the same adjective modifies Spirit.

"But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9: 11-14).

A hasty glance at this quotation shows that the writer is contrasting the offering of goats and calves, which under the law were sacrificed continually, with the one and all-sufficient sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Goats and calves were in the former dispensation repeatedly offered to make atonement for the offenders. In most striking contrast with this practice the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest of good things to come, made His sacrifice, once for all, which accomplishes *aïōnios* Redemption. What is the force of this statement? Atonement has to be made for sin. The Levitical sacrifices were offered continually because they could expiate sin for a short time only—the yearly sacrifice on the day of atonement rolled forward the sins of the faithful worshipers for one year. With the return of the yearly atonement another sacrifice had to be offered to expiate the same sins. Now, since Christ has come, His all-sufficient sacrifice accomplishes the work of atonement once for all. The contrast, therefore, between the continuous repeating of the animal sacrifices with the one all-sufficient sacrifice of our Lord shows that the word *aïōnios* can have but one meaning—namely, eternal.

In explaining the basis of this all-sufficient sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the writer states that Christ made His offering through "an eternal Spirit." The translators have inserted the definite article *the* before "eternal Spirit." In the original text it is not used; therefore the indefinite article only is proper. Hence the footnote of the Revised Version says, "eternal Spirit." Christ by His Spirit was able to make this sacrifice once for all. What kind of Spirit did He have? In John 1: 1 we are told that "In the beginning was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God"; i. e., in association with God. The expression, "In the beginning," has the same significance as in Genesis 1: 1. We have already seen that in the latter passage it signifies that part of eternity which antedates time. From John 1 and many other

passages we see that the Lord Jesus Christ was co-eternal with God; therefore, when the writer of Hebrews speaks of His sacrifice and of its having been made by "an eternal Spirit," we see that he was speaking of the eternal Spirit (nature) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore "eternal" is the correct translation of *aiōnios* in this passage.

From these two examples one can clearly see that the word under consideration does carry the idea of everlasting. But one other example will suffice to strengthen this conclusion. "And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev. 14:6). In this verse we read that there is but one gospel. According to Galatians 1:8, 9 this message of good news pertains to the one and all-sufficient sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ by which redemption is purchased for those who trust Him. Everything that will be reconciled\* to God will be restored through the blood of the Cross

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\* Some students of the Word have hastily drawn the conclusion from such a passage as Colossians 1:19, 20 that all things will be reconciled to God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence they conclude that the devil and all the fallen angels together with the wicked of all the ages will pass through a kind of purgatory in the future and finally be restored and reconciled to God. The sincerity of those emphasizing this teaching cannot be called in question. Nevertheless we must remember that sincerity, while indispensable, is not all that is requisite to a comprehension of the truth.

These good brethren fail to make the distinction between language used relatively and absolutely. An example of the former type is John's declaration found in Matthew 3:5, 6: "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about the Jordan; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Here we are told that all Judæa and all the region round about the Jordan went to John's services and were baptized. From Luke 7:29, 30 we learn that the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected against themselves the counsel of God not being baptized of John. This latter passage makes an exception to the statement that all were baptized; hence we are driven to the position that the statement in Matthew 3:5, 6 is used relatively.

An example of the absolute use of language is found in Matthew 10:2-4. In the second verse we are told that there were twelve apostles, and following this statement their names appear.

We are never to assume that a passage is used in the relative sense unless there is positive evidence indicating this fact. This evidence is to be sought in the immediate context and also in the larger sweep of Scripture. In the passage sometimes there may be no facts pointing to the relative use but, should it clash with other clear and unmistakable statements we must, upon the basis that all Scripture harmonizes, select that interpretation which accords with known truth.

Paul's statement in Colossians 1:19, 20 if taken alone would indicate that all things in the heavens above and the earth beneath will be reconciled eventually to God. Is this position correct? This immediate context cannot

of Christ (Col. 1:19, 20). Therefore the blessed results which accrue from the one sacrifice of Christ continue throughout eternity. His praises will be sung throughout the ages of the future; therefore when the gospel is called the *aionion* gospel, the Lord indicates that it is everlasting.

### B. *Significance of the Noun aion*

In discussing the distinction between *aion* and *chronos* Thayer (Greek Lexicon) quotes Schmidt approvingly as follows:

“both words denote the abstract idea of time and with special reference to its extent or duration; *chronos* is the general designation for time, which can be divided up into portions, each of which is in its turn a *chronos*; on the other hand, *aion*, which in the concrete and simple language of Homer (Pindar

decide the question. That information must be gathered from other sources. We shall see in the further discussion of the text that the Scriptures clearly teach a punishment of the wicked for ever and ever. This fact shows that Paul's statement is to be interpreted relatively and not absolutely as some have erroneously supposed. Therefore we conclude that all things will not be reconciled to God but only those who accept the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ and those things connected with them.

Peter's statement in Acts 3:19-21 has been given as proof of the restoration of all things to fellowship with God. The Apostle in speaking of our Lord and His session at the right hand of God declared, “whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old.” Unfortunately those seeking for proof of the reconciliation of all things stop this quotation with the word “things” and omit the qualifying clause beginning with “whereof God spake. . .” This statement does not affirm that all things will be restored to God at the coming of the Lord but simply declares that at the coming of Jesus in glory God will restore all things which He mentions in the prophets. He will restore all things of which He has spoken and only those things.

Another passage relied upon to prove the final reconciliation of all things is I Corinthians 15:20-24. In this passage Paul declared that all died in Adam; in like manner all shall be made alive in Christ, but each in his own order. From the context it is clear that he was speaking of the resurrection of the body. Death came upon all people because of Adam's sin. Resurrection will come to all because of Christ's one righteous act of obedience. This making alive in Christ is not an affirmation of salvation or reconciliation but simply of resurrection. The first fruits of the resurrection occurred when Christ arose. The dead in Christ will be raised when the Lord returns from heaven to the air to catch up His living saints. At the conclusion of the millennial age, as we shall see in the main discussion, the wicked dead will be raised; hence all will be made alive in the sense of being raised from the dead with the bodies which they are to have throughout eternity. This passage is far from saying that all will be saved.

Let me conclude this footnote by repeating the necessity of taking every thing at its primary, ordinary, literal meaning in the light of the facts presented in the immediate context and in the larger sweep of God's Word. All Scripture harmonizes. Any theory or explanation which conflicts with other plain statements of Holy Writ cannot be correct.

and the Tragedians) denotes the allotted lifetime, even the life, of the individual, in Attic prose differs from *chronos* by denoting time unlimited and boundless, which is not conceived of as divisible into *aïdnes* (contrast here biblical usage and see below), but rather into *chronos*."

After quoting Timæus of Locri, a Pythagorean philosopher (375 B. C.), Thayer gives us the following information concerning this word *aïdnios*:

"The adjective *achronos* independent of time, above and beyond all time, is synonymous with *aïdnios*; where time (with its subdivisions and limitations) ends eternity begins."

From the information which we have gathered we find that the adjective *aïdnios* connotes "eternity"; also the substantive *aïdn* indicates "eternity" in certain connections. There is some dispute as to the etymology of the word. It is most highly probable that "*aïdn* is connected with *aiei*, *aei*, Sanskrit *evas*, Latin *aevum*, Gothic *aivs*, German *ewig*, and English *aye*, *ever*." According to Thayer it means primarily "age, a human life time, life itself." Secondly, it connotes "an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity." On this phase of the question Thayer very aptly makes this remark: "With this signification the Hebrew and Rabbinic idea of the word *olam* (of which in the Septuagint *aïdn* is the equivalent) is combined in the Biblical and ecclesiastical writings." Hence in the New Testament, he continues, it is used in different combinations with various significations. To clarify the matter I shall call attention to the various phrases appearing in the New Testament which have bearing upon the significance of *aïdn*.

### C. Significance of Certain Idiomatic Phrases

#### 1. THE MEANING OF *eis ton aïdna*

In the synagogue at Capernaum Jesus declared,

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea, and the bread which I give is my flesh, for the life of the world. . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. . . As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he shall live because of me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died; he that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (Jno. 6: 48-58).

In verse 47 Jesus affirmed that the one who believes on Him has eternal life. In order to explain His position He declared that

He was the bread of life. This bread of life was not like the manna which the fathers ate in the wilderness and died. On the contrary, this bread which He offered them was that which came down out of heaven and of which men may eat and never die. "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live *eis ton aiōna* forever." It is evident from the context that our Lord was speaking of the believer's accepting Him as the Saviour of the world in terms of the food which they had eaten the day before. The audience had been fed by Him the previous day and had followed Him to the synagogue in Capernaum expecting more. Therefore Jesus clothed His message in terms of their desires.

But what is meant by the expression *eternal* life? This question is answered in verse 57: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me." The life which God the Father possesses is eternal in quality and in duration. The same is true of the Son. According to this verse, therefore, the one who eats this heavenly bread likewise shall live because of Him. Jesus as the Son of man was living and possessing the same kind of life as the eternal Father. One who eats His flesh and blood (accepts the Lord Jesus by faith) has the same kind of life which Christ possesses. Since that is eternal in duration, the believer has eternal life. This thought is expressed in the last statement of verse 58. The one eating this bread will live *eis ton aiōna* forever. This phrase, therefore, carries the idea of eternal salvation.

## 2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *eis ton aiōna tou aiōnos*

In Hebrews 1:8 we have the idiom appearing in this heading. Since this is a quotation from the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, it is the rendering made of the original text of Psalm 45:6. The Hebrew literally rendered is "for ever and ever." The two words in the original carries the idea of eternity. This truth becomes self-evident when one recognizes the fact that the sentence of which these words are a part is an affirmation of the duration of the throne of God: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The translators of the Septuagint Version were thoroughly aware of the fact that the throne of God is everlasting. This fact proves that, when the translation was made (c. 285-250 B. C.), the Greek idiom expressed the same idea. Therefore we may be certain that this phrase in Hebrews 1:8 expresses eternal duration.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *eis hemeran aiōnos*

In the doxology of 2 Peter 3:18 we have this idiomatic expression: *eis hemeran aiōnos*, "To him be glory both now and into day of age" (slavish literal translation). The antecedent of "him" is "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" of the preceding verse. Thus Peter was pronouncing a prediction that to Christ shall be glory at the present time and into the day of the age. Suppose we assume that "age" here refers to one special era of the future which will pass away for ever. Upon this hypothesis, then, Peter was not desiring that eternal glory be given to the Lord Jesus Christ but was simply wishing that He be honored for a limited time in the future and then cease to be recognized. Such an hypothesis is absurd. Thayer in giving the meaning of this phrase states that its significance is "unto the day which is eternity."

In Ecclesiasticus 18:10 we have this statement:

"As a drop of water from the sea, and a pebble from the sand;  
So are a few years in the day of eternity."

The phrase rendered "in the day of eternity" is *en hemera aiōnos*. Notice the comparison which is made in this quotation. In the preceding verse the writer declared "The number of man's days at the most are a hundred years." With this period of time in mind he instituted the comparison found in verse 10. These few years of a man's life (one hundred) are as a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand upon the seashore in comparison with what he calls "the day of the age." From this comparison we can see that the expression "the day of the age" signifies eternity.

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHRASE *eis tous aiōnas*

The phrase "into the ages" is rendered by Thayer as "unto the ages, i. e., as long as time shall be (the plural indicates the individual ages whose sum is eternity)." This idiom occurs in the language of the angel Gabriel to Mary, the mother of Jesus. To her he announced that the Almighty would give unto the Lord Jesus the throne of His father David and that He should reign over the house of Jacob into the ages. Does this promise indicate that Christ will throughout all eternity reign over the house of Jacob? It may be thus interpreted, because this idiom does indicate everlasting duration in such passages as Romans 1:25. In this verse the Apostle speaks of the Creator of the universe as

the one "who is blessed into the ages." How long in the future will the omnipotent God be blessed? Only one answer is possible—namely, throughout all eternity. This idiom, therefore, in Romans 1:25 indicates all eternity of the future. Since it was used by the angel Gabriel with reference to our Lord's reigning over the house of Jacob, we may understand it in one of two ways: first, to indicate that He is to reign throughout all eternity over the house of Jacob; secondly, to reign upon the throne of David so long as the sun, moon, and stars endure, as indicated in Psalm 89:34-37. Since Gabriel's language was an echo of the promise in this Psalm, it is quite likely that the idiom in the Greek which he used signified the same thing that was indicated in the original promise—namely, that the Son of David is to mount the throne and to remain there forever—so long as the sun, moon, and stars endure. As to which of these interpretations is the correct one, it is impossible for us to say, since the Lord has not given us definite information as to the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Messiah, to the saved Jews throughout all eternity.

This same idiom appears in the language of the Apostle Paul, who, in speaking of Israel, affirmed,—“whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed into the ages” Rom. 9:5. In this passage Christ is called God. Of Him, it is affirmed that He is blessed into the ages. How long will the Son of God be blessed since He is God who redeemed the human family? The answer is—throughout all eternity. Such is the significance of the idiom in this place.

In concluding his discussion of God's plan, the Apostle spoke of the Lord in the following sentence: “For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him *be* the glory into the ages” (Rom. 11:36). This doxology again may be called a prophecy that everlasting glory and honor will be attributed to the one eternal God forever and ever. The context demands this signification. This same idiomatic expression occurs with the same import in 2 Corinthians 11:31.

##### 5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *eis pantas tous aïdōnas*

In Jude's doxology (vss. 24, 25) he ascribes glory, majesty, power and authority unto the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ “before every age and now and into all the ages.” In this statement eternity is divided into three sections: the pe-

riod prior to creation, time, and eternity beyond the millennial age. Certainly no one could accuse Jude of wanting glory and honor to be ascribed to God through only a short time of eternity. The facts of the context demand that we understand the expression "into all the ages" as indicating throughout eternity of the future.

6. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXPRESSION *eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn*

According to Thayer, the phrase, "into the ages of the ages," the translation of the idiom appearing in the heading of this section, is one "in which expression the endless future is divided up into various periods the shorter of which are comprehended in the longer." In the Pauline doxologies especially do we find this idiom which constitutes a prayer and at the same time a prophecy that glory and honor will be given to God into the ages of the ages. For occurrences of this expression see Romans 16:27, Galatians 1:5, Philippians 4:20, 1 Timothy 1:17, 2 Timothy 4:18, 1 Peter 4:11, Revelation 1:6. Both John and Paul desired that glory and honor be given to God Almighty throughout all eternity.

In Revelation 1:17, 18 Jesus said "I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive into the ages of ages." Without doubt this passage means nothing more than that Jesus, the God-man, is alive for ever and ever. The same statement is made with reference to the Lord God Almighty who sits upon the throne (Rev. 4). John declared that He is "the one living into the ages of the ages." Here our idiom postulates eternity because God lives for ever and ever. In this instance our phrase can mean nothing but everlasting, never ending. The strong angel who comes down out of heaven and who puts one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land (Rev. 10) swears by "him that liveth into the ages of the ages, who created the heaven and the things that are therein." Here again, this idiom postulates the eternal existence of the Almighty. In Revelation 15:7, John speaks of God "who liveth into the ages of the ages." Here we have the same idiom connoting eternity. Once more, in Revelation 22:5 we find the prediction that the saved of this earth live and reign in the new Jerusalem "into the ages of the ages." Here again eternal duration is affirmed by this special idiom.

### 7. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *eis tas pantas geneas tou aiōnos tōn aiōnōn*

In concluding his marvelous petition (Eph. 3:14-21) the Apostle Paul prayed that there might be glory unto God in the church through Jesus Christ "unto all generations of the age of the ages." Dr. S. D. F. Salmond in the *Expositor's Greek Testament* made the following comment on this verse: "Another of these reduplicated, cumulative expressions by which the mind of man working with the ideas of time labors to convey the idea of the eternal. The formula may be, as was suggested by Grotius, a compilation of two distinct phrases of similar meaning, one in which continuance, endless continuance, is expressed in terms of *genea, geneai*; and another in which the same idea is expressed in terms of *aiōn, aiōnes . . .*; the precise idea underlying the phrase is not quite clear. It may be that the everlasting future is thought of as one long 'age' embracing in it an unnumbered succession of 'generations' and making the sum and crown of all possible 'ages.' Or the 'age of ages' may have the force of a superlative, 'the age *par excellence*,' the 'age beside which there is none other to be named,' and that regarded as containing in itself all conceivable 'generations.'" According to my judgment this phrase must be interpreted in the light of its general usage as denoting eternal existence. Without doubt, the idiom under review conceives of eternity as consisting of different ages. Each of these subdivisions of eternity is in turn, thought of as being divided into yet smaller sections here called generations. Manifestly the language used is a prayer that eternal glory may be given to the everlasting God without ceasing.

### 8. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *apo tōn aiōnōn kai apo tōn geneōn*

In Colossians 1:26 we have the phrase "from the ages and from the generations." In this passage Paul speaks of the ministry of the gospel with which he had been entrusted as having been "hid from the ages and from the generations; but as now having been made manifest to his saints." This phrase, as is indicated by the context, naturally looks back into the past. It is quite probable that since "ages" is connected with "generations," the phrase takes our minds back to the beginning of the human race. It is, however, altogether probable that it may take us back prior to the creation of the world. In this case, we must understand

Paul as affirming that the gospel ministry was kept a secret from the angels and all intelligent created beings. A. S. Peake in the *Expositors' Greek Testament* makes a most excellent comment on the phrases. "Without identifying the terms with personal existences, we may, with Haupt (cf. also Sodon) take *aiōnes* of the ages before the world, and *geneai* of the generations of human history. This will be practically the same as saying that the mystery was concealed from angels and men."

#### 9. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *eis tous aiōnes tōn aiōnōn*

In Romans 16:25 Paul in speaking of the mystery of the gospel says that it had "been kept in silence through times eternal," but is now made manifest for obedience of faith among the nations. Here the expression *eis tous aiōnes tōn aiōnōn* doubtless refers to both time and eternity prior to the Cross of Christ, for throughout all past eternity and in historic times that plan of God had been kept secret.

#### 10. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *pro tōn aiōnōn*

In 1 Corinthians 2:7 Paul speaks of the mystery "that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the ages unto our glory." What is the meaning of this passage? We have already seen that the word, "ages," in many instances refers to eternity both in the past and in the future. Presently I hope to show that this same word has a secondary meaning, which is properly translated in certain passages "worlds," and that in these instances it refers to the physical universe. For the present let us assume that it has this meaning as one of its secondary definitions. According to the laws of lexicography, we must select that definition which accords with all the facts of a given context. If we are to understand the word in its primary significance as referring to eternity in the past, the phrase "before the ages (eternity)" would be a contradiction in terms; hence this signification is ruled out. We shall also see that "ages" sometimes refers to smaller divisions of what we call "time." If we are to select this definition, the significance of the phrase under discussion would indicate that part of eternity which antedates time. This interpretation is a possible one. It appears to me, however, that the more probable meaning is that it refers to the physical universe; in this case, we have Paul's saying that the mystery concerning the gospel was hidden in the counsels of God prior to the creation of the universe.

We have this same idiom with a little modification in II Timothy 1:9. In charging the young Timothy to be bold and to suffer hardships with the gospel, the aged Apostle Paul spoke of God's purpose and grace which were given to us in Christ Jesus, *prochronōn aiōniōn*. The Greek phrase given in the last sentence is translated in the Revised Version "before times eternal." The marginal reading of this verse is "long ages ago." The footnote is unsatisfactory because it does not hold to the literal translation. Even the text reading is very unsatisfactory because it involves a contradiction, for there cannot be even a short space of time before "times eternal." In view of this fact we are forced to believe that the phrase here refers either to the integral portions into which eternity is divided, or to the time of man's existence and conceives of it as being partitioned into smaller periods. With this meaning we can understand how this grace was given us in Christ prior to man's creation. This is probably the significance of the phrase.

This same expression occurs in Titus 1:2 which speaks of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised us "before times eternal." Without doubt it has the same significance as it does in II Timothy 1:9.

#### 11. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *prothesin tōn aiōnōn*

In Ephesians 3:11 Paul speaks of "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Literally translated the phrase should be "the purpose of the ages." Even to the casual Bible reader it is abundantly evident that there is a purpose which runs throughout the Scriptures. So far as man is concerned, this purpose is first revealed in Genesis 3:15. All history from that time onward, the records of which have been preserved for us, is but the unfolding of this sublime purpose. The completion of the task of redemption is seen in the latter chapters of the book of Revelation. In Ephesians 1:3-14 we read of the unfolding of the divine, eternal plan and purpose to which, doubtless, reference is made in the phrase under consideration. The redeemed of this age will cooperate with God in this purpose of the ages in the future, for Paul declared "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). From the context we see that the apostle was talking about the saints of this age and of their fitting into the plans of God in the ages to come. After the Christian dispensa-

tion the millennial age dawns. Following it will be what we call the ages of eternity when the redeemed of this earth will dwell in the new Jerusalem which comes down out of the new (eternal) heavens upon the new (eternal) earth. Since there is but one other age during which this earth shall stand and since the apostle spoke of the ages to come, we may be certain that the expression, "the purpose of the ages," signifies God's eternal purpose which had its beginning back in the eternity of the past, continues through time, and runs throughout all eternity of the future.

#### 12. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *apo aiōnos*

In Luke 1:70 we have the expression *apo aiōnos* occurring in the following quotation: "(As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old.)" The same idiom appears in Acts 3:21 and in 15:18. Since the Lord was referring to His prophets through whom He had spoken to men, it is evident that the word *aiōn* does not in these and like passages indicate eternity but ancient times. This idiom is common both in the Old Testament and in the New.

#### 13. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *ta telē tōn aiōnōn*

In the first part of I Corinthians 10 the apostle rehearsed some of Israel's wilderness experiences and held them up as a warning to the Corinthian Church. With these historical occurrences as a spiritual background, the apostle exhorted the brethren to a close walk with God, for, declared he, "these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

The writer of Hebrews in chapter nine discussed the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ and contrasted it with the many offerings made under the law. In concluding his remarks he affirmed: "but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26).

From these two passages just quoted it is obvious that the term "ages" refers to smaller divisions of time. To emphasize the point in the Corinthian passage, I might illustrate by lines converging at a given point. The ages in the past, both prior to historic times and since, all meet, so far as purpose is concerned, in the present age at the cross. Through all the ages of the past God has been working things toward one grand, glorious consummation. Like

streams flowing from various sections of a country and converging into one large river, the movement of events has been going forward and has mingled their influences in the one mighty, on-rushing tide of accomplishments during the present era. When this age, however, is brought to a close, the present stream of events will broaden out into a mighty sea of calm and serenity continuing for a thousand years. In the passage from Hebrews the same imagery is presented, even though a different choice of words is used; hence the writer declared that once for all in the end of the ages our Lord was manifested to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In other words, all the plans and purposes of God focus in the Cross of Calvary. Both of the passages now under consideration place the Cross on a very high eminence and consider the preceding eras or ages as only preparatory to the present dispensation. The Apostle Paul had the same thought in mind when he by inspiration wrote the Galatian letter, for he declared "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4: 4, 5). In this passage the apostle thinks of the first advent of our Lord as the fulness of the times. This statement is certainly Christo-centric with the emphasis upon the Cross and the Blood of the Lord Jesus. The writer of Hebrews in 1: 1, 2 spoke of Christ's appearance as occurring "at the end of these days." The Apostle Peter also spoke of our Lord's appearing "at the last of the times." From these various expressions we can see that the New Testament writers considered the Christian era as the conclusion of the series of ages which had preceded. This Christian era develops into the millennial age as the bud unfolds into the beautiful flower.

#### 14. THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE AGES

In Matthew 12: 32 our Lord declared that there is no forgiveness for the sin against the Holy Spirit "neither in this age, nor in that which is to come." This "age" refers to the present Christian dispensation and "that which is to come," to the millennial era. The same distinction between the present and the future ages is set forth in Ephesians 1: 21. The contrast between these eras likewise appears in other passages but these suffice.

In Matthew 13: 41 Jesus spoke of the separation of the righteous from the wicked "in the consummation of the age." Accord-

ing to the Great Commission (Matt. 28: 19, 20), the gospel is to be preached to all nations during this era unto "the consummation of the age." Paul in Ephesians 1: 9, 10 spoke of the millennial era as the dispensation or ministration of the fulness of the seasons. In relation to the former ages this language conceives of the glorious millennial era as the consummation, the one of fruition and glory.

#### 15. FIGURATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF *aiōn*

The word *aiōnes* is sometimes used in a metaphorical sense. For instance, in Hebrews 1: 2 we are told that God through Christ made the *aiōnas* "worlds." This word primarily means "ages," but in this context it is quite evident that the writer was not speaking of the ages but of material things. The thought is the same as that expressed in John 1: 3. Just before using this word John spoke of all things as having been made through Christ and added that "through whom also he (God) made the worlds." The flow of thought demands this secondary meaning.

Since this is true, one asks, why did not the Lord use a word which primarily means the physical universe? This question is to the point. The Biblical writers constantly used figures of speech. We are not, however, to jump at the conclusion that the bulk of their utterances are figures. We are never to resort to such a method of interpretation. Only when the facts of the context indicate that a passage is to be taken figuratively are we justified in thus interpreting it. Since the context shows that the writer did not use "ages" in the primary, literal meaning, we are to understand that here it has a secondary or metaphorical significance. Here it is quite evident that by metonymy the author spoke of the "contained in terms of the container." We are constantly using this figure. For instance, we say that the teakettle is boiling, whereas we are speaking of the water in the kettle. Thus the contained is spoken of in terms of the container. The present physical universe consisting of many heavenly bodies has its existence during certain of the ages of eternity; hence it is contained within these ages. It was natural, therefore, for the writer to speak of these physical worlds in terms of the ages.

Another example of this metonymical use of the word "ages" is found in Hebrews 11: 3. In this passage we are told that the "ages" have been "mended, completed, put in order, arranged, or adjusted." It is a little difficult to know just exactly what is meant

by this verse. Did the writer have in mind the original creation or the work of reconstruction after the wreckage recorded in Genesis 1:2, the account of which is given in the first chapter of Genesis? It is doubtful that he was talking of the original creation. I am inclined to believe that the work of the "six days of reconstruction" recorded in Genesis 1:2b-31 is the thing to which reference is made. I am led to this conclusion since the word primarily means to "repair or mend," but on this point I will not be dogmatic. In view of all the facts, it is clear to my mind that the physical universe is referred to in this passage. This statement being correct, we can see that this verse is another illustration of the word "ages" being used metonymically, indicating the universe.

A third instance of this metaphorical use is found in I Timothy 1:17. Literally rendered the verse reads: "But to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, be honor and glory into the ages of the ages. Amen." God is said to be the King of the ages, the immortal, unseen God. Since Paul speaks of God as the incorruptible and invisible God, it appears that he is instituting a contrast between the Almighty and what he refers to as "the ages." If this supposition be correct, the expression, "King of the ages," does not refer to periods of time but rather to the various worlds whose existence comes within certain ages of eternity.

From this long discussion of the word *aiōn* and special idioms in which it appears, we see that it in various settings has different shades of meanings. Since it has these several connotations, it becomes necessary for one to examine very closely the context of every occurrence in order to arrive at the meaning of the inspired writers.

We have seen that the word *aiōnios* is used in connection with God Himself and with the Lord Jesus Christ. Since they are eternal in their existence, this adjective cannot indicate "age-lasting." Such an idea is contrary to the flow of thought in each passage. It can only in these connections mean "everlasting—never-ending." This same adjective modifies the life which Christ gives to those who trust Him. He declared that He gives His life to them. The same kind of life which He possesses He gives to every born-again soul. The life of everyone who has been regenerated is hid with Christ in God. In view of these fundamental

truths of Christianity we are driven to the conclusion that this adjective when modifying the life imparted by Christ to the believer can only mean everlasting—never-ceasing. The believer has passed out of death into life and will not come into judgment. Such are the declarations of the Lord Jesus. The reason that he will never come into any kind of judgment for trial is that he possesses the same kind of life as does the Lord Jesus Christ. We have become partakers of His divine nature through the “exceeding great promises” granted to us (II Pet. 1: 3, 4).

Those who receive eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ shall reign in the new Jerusalem into the ages of the ages, according to Revelation 22: 5. The expression, “into the ages of the ages,” is the oft-recurring expression used in connection with God’s eternal existence. Therefore it connotes nothing short of a never-ceasing existence throughout all eternity of the future. Since the saints in the new Jerusalem are said to reign into the ages of the ages, this promise is an affirmation that the life which the Christian receives from Christ is everlasting.

According to the Scriptures, the one who has been raised with Christ and seated in the heavenly places now will, either by death or by the rapture of the church at the coming of the Lord for His saints, be ushered into His presence,” and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. 5: 17). The word translated “ever” connotes the idea of “at all times, always, ever.” From that event onward they who are united with Christ will ever be with Him wherever He is. They will be with Him throughout the millennial age and will reign with Him. After that golden era this earth will be destroyed (Rev. 20: 11-15) and there will be created new heavens and a new earth. Then the new Jerusalem will come down out of the new heavens upon the new earth and the saints who have been with the Lord and who have reigned with Him during the thousand years will enter that new Jerusalem and will reign with Him “into the ages of the ages.”

It is beyond the conception of our finite minds to grasp the grandeur of the glory which awaits the children of God. Paul in apocalyptic vision saw the future and exclaimed that the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to usward. From the connection in Romans eight where this passage to which I am now alluding occurs, we can see that he was speaking of the millennial age when the curse will be lifted. Since it is impossible for mortal mind to conceive

of the glory and the blessedness of the kingdom era, it goes without saying that it is utterly impossible for us now under our present limitations to comprehend even in the least manner the greatness of the glory that shall be the heritage of the people of God throughout all eternity.

As the word *aiōnios*, "everlasting," when modifying the life of the children of God indicates "eternal, never-ending," so the same adjective when modifying the noun "punishment" can connote nothing less. Hence in Matthew 25:46 when Jesus said that the righteous go off into everlasting life, He indicated their eternal and blessed existence with God. In the same manner the adjective *aiōnios* when modifying the punishment of the wicked can mean only that they go off into everlasting, unceasing punishment—a banishment from the presence of God and the glory of His power.

This everlasting punishment is conscious existence under unfavorable circumstances. Some have erroneously understood that it means annihilation. Such an idea is not to be found in the Scriptures. According to Revelation 19:20, the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire at the beginning of the thousand years of our Lord's reign. They are thoroughly conscious. At the conclusion of that period we see them there just as they were at the beginning. After the little space following the millennium the devil is cast into the lake of fire along with the beast and the false prophet and they are punished for ever and ever. These facts indicate clearly that there is conscious existence in this place that is called "the lake of fire" throughout the ages of all eternity.

Some have considered the expression, "day and night," in the clause, "and they shall be tormented day and night unto the ages of the ages" (Rev. 20:10) as modifying or limiting the duration of "the ages of the ages." This theory claims that, when day and night in the ordinarily accepted meaning of the words cease, the period designated by "ages of the ages" likewise closes. Hence it is believed that the punishment in the passage here mentioned ceases. In the light of this explanation it is affirmed that the punishment mentioned in the prediction is simply age-lasting and is by no means eternal. Will the passage yield such a meaning? Can the use of "day and night" in the sentence limit the eternal duration indicated by "into the ages of the ages"? An examination of other occurrences of this idiom must determine the answer. In

Revelation 4:8 we see that the living creatures who proclaim "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty," "have no rest day and night." What does this statement mean? It can mean only one thing,—namely, that this praise service continues without any interruption. These celestial beings will continue this praise of the Almighty forever without even any temporary cessation. The same idiom is used in Revelation 7:15 to indicate the uninterrupted service which the tribulation saints will render to God for ever. Again the same expression occurs in describing the punishment of those who worship the beast (Rev. 14:11), "for they have no rest day and night." In the light of all these facts we must conclude that "day and night" in Revelation 20:10 does not limit the duration of "the ages of the ages" but simply connotes the unceasing character of the punishment of the wicked throughout all eternity.

It is very difficult for us at the present stage of our existence to comprehend eternal life and bliss in fellowship with God for ever and ever and at the same time to understand the clear Scriptural teaching of everlasting punishment. The punishment meted out to anyone must be commensurate with the sin or the offense. In view of the fact, however, that every inducement is made to each individual soul to accept life eternal and fellowship with God throughout all eternity, enjoying the riches of His grace in an ever-expanding and developing life of joy and service, the rejection of such light and blessings demands punishment that is commensurate with the sin. From this point of view, therefore, we can see faintly the philosophical justification for the institution of eternal punishment. When, however, this life with all of its shadows shall have passed, we shall be able to see things from God's standpoint and justify Him in all of His decisions which are holy, righteous, and just.

Unfortunately the doctrine of eternal punishment—banishment from the presence of God and the glory of His might for ever—is unacceptable to many in these days. The faithful minister of the gospel will not, therefore, consider the question whether or not this tenet is popular but will simply ask the question: Do the Scriptures teach everlasting punishment? And in his heart of heart say to his redeemer, "If so, I will proclaim the truth in love and plead with men and women to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ from the wrath to come."

### X. CONFIRMATORY EVIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE KINGDOM

Our Lord in the Olivet discourse placed the kingdom age as following upon His return to earth. Confirmation for this position is seen in many passages throughout the Scriptures, but in this connection I will call attention to three forceful quotations only.

In the book of Immanuel (Isaiah 7-12) we have some very vivid pictures of Messiah's birth, conquest, and reign. In 7:14 appears the forecast of the virgin birth of King Messiah. In chapter 9 the prophet looked forward to the time when God will have increased the joy of the nation and its wealth. He explained how the Lord brings this about, for, he declared, the oppressor has been slain and all the implements and weapons of war have been destroyed. The reason assigned for the destruction of all the weapons of war is:

"For unto us a child has been born, unto us a son has been given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (Author's Translation Isa. 9:6, 7).

In the eleventh chapter of Isaiah we see the reign of King Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, upon the earth. Under the symbolism of a plant growing out of a stump of a tree which has been cut down the Messiah is presented (vs. 1). The following verse is the literal prediction that the sevenfold Spirit of God will rest upon Messiah. (This passage seems to be the foundation for the expression found in Revelation, "the seven Spirits of God," Rev. 1:4.) In these two verses, therefore, the birth and public ministry of our Lord are presented. In the three following verses the scenes which will be enacted at the second coming of our Lord are described. Thus the entire Christian dispensation is passed over in silence between verses 2 and 3. That verses 3-5 foretell the second coming of our Lord is evident from the fact that in them He is represented as coming in judgment, executing vengeance upon all the wicked and exercising the authority of Judge. From the gospel narrative we see that Christ refused to exercise that function. On one occasion a young man insisted that He arbitrate the matter concerning an inheritance. Immediately He declined to do so. His sole work when here upon earth nineteen hundred years ago was that of a spiritual ministry. In John 5:22 He said

that all judgment had been committed unto the Son by the Father. In the twelfth chapter of John we have a reference to the vision which Isaiah was privileged to see. By this revelation the ancient prophet saw the Lord Jesus on His throne of glory, for the apostle thus interpreted the passage in verse 41. With this vision of glory before the minds of his auditors, Jesus declared that He was not judging any man but that He had come to save all who believe. Following this declaration our Lord most clearly and emphatically stated that "the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (vs. 48). Remembering Christ's statement (Jno. 5:22) that He is to be the Judge, we must understand this declaration relative to the Word's judging the unbeliever in the last day as an affirmation that Christ Himself will judge all unbelievers by the message which He gave. Since He will not perform the function of a Judge until He returns and since, when He does come back, He will slay all of the wicked, we are driven to the inevitable conclusion that Isaiah 11:3-5 is a clear prediction of the Lord's return and of His dealing drastically with the wicked and judging the world in righteousness.

In view of the facts noted in the last paragraph we see that in Isaiah 11:1-5 the two descriptions of the first and second comings of Jesus blend just as pictures frequently do which are thrown on the screen by the stereopticon. Verse 1 throws a picture of the first coming of Christ upon the prophetic screen. Rapidly fading, it blends with the dim outlines of one which presents the scenes of His second coming as seen in verses 3-5. The prophets constantly blended their descriptions of the first and second comings of the Messiah, passing entirely over the present Christian dispensation.

In Isaiah 11:6-9 we have a wonderful description of the lifting of the curse from the animal creation when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. This has been interpreted in two ways: first, as a figurative expression, indicating the conversion of wicked, evil men who become like little children after their regeneration; secondly, as a prediction of the lifting of the curse and the restoration of the animal kingdom to its primitive condition prior to the fall. Which of these versions is the correct one? To determine this question we must remember the golden rule of interpretation which says that we are to take every word at its primary, ordinary,

usual, literal meaning unless there is positive evidence in the context indicating a figurative or symbolic meaning. Is there any warrant in this context to indicate that the Lord used this language figuratively? In vain will one seek for such proof. Therefore we are logically bound to accept this prediction at its face value and believe that God was speaking of the lifting of the curse when Jesus returns. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that in the preceding verses the prophet was describing the second coming of our Lord and His slaying all of the wicked who will be upon the earth at that time. This oracle furthermore carries the inference that those who are not wicked will be exempted from these fiery strokes of judgment. In this picture of the future destruction of all of the wicked appears the forecast of the removal of the enmity from the animal kingdom. Thus there is harmony and congruity in the picture presented by Isaiah. In view of these facts we can see that the prophet was not speaking of the conversion of men now but of the lifting of the literal curse from the animal kingdom at the second coming.

This passage is confirmed by other oracles of the prophets. For instance, Hosea in speaking of the time of Israel's final restoration to fellowship with God declared that, "in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of the heavens, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah" (Hos. 2: 18-20). Following this promise in the next paragraph is one of the restoration of normal rain which will produce luxuriant crops.

Further confirmatory evidence of the lifting of the curse is seen in Paul's wonderful description found in Romans 8: 18-25. In this passage the apostle spoke of the curse which fell upon the earth when Adam sinned; hence the creation was subjected to vanity not of its own will but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself should be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Undoubtedly when this passage is studied in its true context one sees immediately that Paul was speaking of the actual, literal lifting of the curse from the earth and its restoration to pristine glory.

In Isaiah 11:10 we have a little glimpse of the city of Jerusalem when our Lord will reign there in glory. For a fuller description of the Holy City as the capital of the restored creation see Isaiah 4:2-6.

No sooner will Christ take up His residence in Jerusalem than He will begin the final and complete restoration of Israel which is foretold in Isaiah 11:11-16. A careful perusal of this passage shows that Isaiah in obedience to "the law of recurrence" went back in his prediction prior to the coming of the Lord in glory and described the restoration of Israel from the four corners of the earth. In this passage he spoke of a second regathering. This statement implies a first. To everyone familiar with the Old Testament the first restoration of the nation occurred when Zerubbabel led certain of the captives from Babylon to Jerusalem. The second one is to be in the end time. At the present time we see the beginning of this movement which will culminate in the complete restoration of the nation of Israel to the land and to fellowship with God. By the prophet Isaiah, therefore, was given a very clear picture of the millennial reign of our Lord here upon earth which will follow His return in glory.

The second of these predictions is Isaiah 24. A careful perusal of the first twenty verses shows us that the prophet foresaw the time that is commonly designated as the day of Jehovah, the time of Jacob's trouble, the Great Tribulation. According to verse 21, immediately following this period of judgment the evil spirits (called the host of the high ones on high), together with the kings of the earth are punished. This chastisement comes in the form of their being incarcerated as prisoners "in the pit" for many days. This information is found in verse 22. The length of their imprisonment is not designated. When they have been thus removed from activity upon the earth, the Lord Jehovah of hosts will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders there will be glory. This information is found in verse 23. From the statement that the Lord will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem we are to understand that reference is made to the city in Palestine known by that name. Never are we warranted in concluding that the prophet was using this name in a figurative or a spiritual sense unless the context in which it occurs thus positively indicates. Therefore we are to conclude that the Lord said what He meant and meant what He said.

While the Almighty in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the Hebrew Messiah, is reigning in Zion these many days, the evil spirits and kings who have been shut up in the pit will remain there. Finally, when the period known as "many days" has expired these incarcerated, rebellious ones will be punished. This passage does not give us any further information in regard to the nature of the affliction.

The third and last passage to be studied in this connection is Revelation 20. In the nineteenth chapter we read of the second coming of our Lord when He makes His appearance upon earth attended by "the armies which are in heaven." By His mighty power He slays the forces marshaled against Jerusalem. At the conclusion of the conflict an invitation is sent out to the birds of the heavens to come and feast upon the dead bodies scattered over the ground. In the final paragraph of chapter 19 (vss. 19-21) appears the prediction that the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

The first and second paragraphs of Revelation 20 are so very important in their bearing on this subject that I quote them:

"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut *it*, and sealed *it* over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I *saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20: 1-6).

The question arising at this point is, how are we to interpret this language? Some claim that it is not to be taken at its face value but that it is highly figurative—a kind of spiritual allegory which portrays the ultimate victory of Christ. On the other hand, others tell us that we are to take the language at its face meaning whenever possible and to interpret all figurative expressions in the light of their usage and in accordance with the facts of the text. In view of these two positions, it behooves us to be very careful in our study of this passage. Repeatedly I have called attention to the fact that the only way for us to understand any passage, whether it be in the Word of God or in profane liter-

ature, is to take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless there is warrant in the context to justify a figurative, metaphorical, or symbolic meaning. This rule is admitted by all logicians and rhetoricians together with grammarians as being the only correct criterion for the interpretation of language. In any passage an expression which evidently from the facts of the context is known to be a figure of speech is thus to be interpreted. A number of figures may appear in one sentence along with a statement of the literal facts. Each phrase or clause must be weighed in the light of all the facts and properly evaluated. All figures stand for realities. Though a passage may be "highly figurative" we may be certain of the fact that there is a stern reality that is spoken of in terms of the figurative language. In view of this fact then we must study each figure and the entire context in order to arrive at the significance intended.

In Psalm 80:8-16 we have the history of Israel from the deliverance out of Egypt to the overthrow of the nation. This is set forth in a passage which is "highly figurative." Here Israel is represented as a vine which the Lord brought out of Egypt. Though this passage is "highly figurative" we are to understand that Egypt means Egypt. The next statement says that God drove out the nations and planted the vine. The nations here referred to were evidently the seven nations of Canaan whom Israel dispossessed upon her conquest of the land. Then under the symbolism of the vine the psalmist continued his narration of Israel's rapid growth and development in the land until the wall surrounding the vineyard was broken down and the beasts of the field came and trod it down. No one can for a second doubt the significance of this language. Neither will one say that this passage is incapable of being comprehended because of its being "highly figurative."

As a practical example of how we interpret language containing figures in our everyday speech, I wish to use this simple little illustration. Suppose I should state that as I was walking down the street I noticed two men standing on a certain corner who were engaged in conversation. As I drew nearer to them, I saw that they were in a heated controversy. Upon coming still nearer I heard one say to the other, "You are a liar." This statement, I tell you, made the other man red hot; he boiled over; that statement kicked the fat in the fire; it was the last straw that broke the camel's back; and the other man knocked him down. The

man reeling fell very heavily upon the pavement. Would anyone have any difficulty in understanding this language? Would anyone say that it was so very "highly figurative" that it was incapable of interpretation? Never. Any sane person would understand that I was talking about a literal fact. He would understand that I was walking down the street and, as I approached a given corner, I saw two men engaged in a heated conversation. Furthermore, he would understand that one man called the other a liar. This statement enraged the man to the extent that he knocked his accuser flat on the pavement. Though I speak of the mental agitation of the irate man under various figures, everyone would understand the literal fact that was set forth in the figurative expressions. If we can understand such figurative language pertaining to literal, material facts we certainly can understand similar figures when they appear in the Scriptures. When we have properly interpreted the various figures appearing in Revelation 20: 1-3 in the light of the context and the usage, we see that this language simply teaches that during a thousand years Satan will be incarcerated in the pit of the abyss and will no longer be free to influence and work through men as he does at the present time. Being cast into this place of confinement at the beginning of the thousand years he remains there until it is finished. At the conclusion he is loosed for a little while.

According to 20: 4 John saw in vision certain ones sitting upon thrones.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I *saw* the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived (literally, 'came to life') and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Who are referred to by the pronoun "they"? The only possible antecedent is to be found in 19: 14 in the form of the phrase, "the armies which are in heaven." Those who constitute the armies of heaven and who come with the Lord Jesus when He returns to earth are the ones who sit upon thrones reigning with Christ during the thousand-year period. Furthermore John saw the souls of those who had been beheaded by the beast because they would not worship his image, likewise, reigning with Christ during the thousand years. These who reign with the Lord in that glorious period are the ones who come up in the "first resurrection." In 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-17 we are told that when our

Lord descends from heaven to the air prior to the Tribulation the dead in Christ are raised and the living saints are translated and meet Him in the air. At the end of the Tribulation those who have fallen by persecution under the beast will likewise be raised and reign with Christ. Both of these classes of resurrected saints reign with Him during the thousand year period and are said to be in the first resurrection.

That the first resurrection is a literal one cannot be denied because in verse 5 John spoke of those who had been put to death and of their being brought back to life. Death is physical; hence their coming back to life is likewise physical. This physical resurrection occurs before the thousand years, for those who are thus raised reign with Christ during this period.

We are told that Christ will reign for a thousand years. What is meant by this number? Much speculation has been indulged in on this point. When we remember the fundamental rule of interpretation concerning the necessity of understanding everything literally unless there is evidence in the context pointing otherwise, we see that it simply means what it says—namely, a thousand years. If there were positive reasons in the text to indicate that the words are not to be taken literally, then I would interpret them symbolically. In view of the absence of such evidence, I take them at their literal meaning.

The Old Testament prophets foretold the time when Jehovah would come and reign in Jerusalem. They did not reveal the duration of this kingdom but described in most glowing terms the splendors of Messiah's régime. Since we know from the Scriptures that this Jehovah whose reign was promised in the Old Testament is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, we may be confident that this reign of a thousand years is to be identified as the fulfilment of those ancient predictions.

In verse 5 we are told that "The rest of the dead lived not (came not to life) until the thousand years should be finished." What is meant by "The rest of the dead"? We have seen that before the millennium the dead in Christ are raised at the rapture of the church. The Tribulation saints are raised at the end of that great cataclysm. Nothing is said about the resurrection of the wicked. The implication is that they remain unraised. When John tells us that the rest of the dead are raised at the end of the thousand years, we must interpret this language as indicating the resur-

rection of the wicked. We shall presently see in the discussion of John 5: 28, 29, that there are two resurrections mentioned by the Lord. Undoubtedly "the resurrection of judgment" is an allusion to the resurrection of the wicked at the conclusion of the millennium.

If the resurrection prior to the millennium is a literal one, and such is the unmistakable meaning, then we are to interpret the resurrection after the millennium as a like event unless there is positive evidence pointing to a different signification for this prediction. We will examine this context in vain for such negative evidence. Therefore, we must conclude that the resurrection at the conclusion of the millennium is that of the wicked. This resurrection is fully described in Revelation 20:11-15.

At the conclusion of the millennial age Satan is loosed for a little while. Immediately he stirs up the nations of the world to revolt against Christ in an attempt to throw off His sovereignty. At that time fire comes down out of heaven and consumes this mighty host and squelches this rebellion.

Then Satan is cast into the lake of fire where are also the beast and false prophet and he with them, together with the lost who will be cast into that place at the judgment of the Great White Throne, will be punished day and night for ever and ever.

Since our Lord in Matthew 25: 31 spoke of His coming and sitting upon the throne of His glory and of His being King, it is evident that He was speaking of the same reign that is set forth here by John in Revelation 20—His millennial reign.

This study has brought us to the conclusion that there is perfect harmony in the prophetic Word. What our Lord said in closing the Olivet discourse supplements the information which John gave in Revelation 20.

In one final statement with reference to Revelation 20, let me say that according to verse 11 the heaven and the earth—the millennial heaven and earth—pass away at the time of the establishment of the Great White Throne judgment. After that great assize of the wicked God will create new heavens and a new earth and the new Jerusalem will come down out of the new heaven upon the new earth. This is the city, foursquare, where the redeemed from this earth will dwell for ever and ever with the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. They will reign "into the ages of the ages" (Rev. 22: 5).

## XI. EXAMINATION OF SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTIONARY PASSAGES

This chapter would not be complete without an examination of certain passages which are understood by some as teaching a different theory. Two principal passages I will examine very briefly.

Our Lord has been interpreted as teaching that there will be a universal judgment day when all, both the wicked and the righteous, will be raised. As proof of this proposition reference is made to John 5: 28, 29:

“Marvel not at this; for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.”

Emphasis is laid upon the word “hour” in this passage; hence it is believed that in one hour of sixty minutes all the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and will be raised for judgment. Is such the teaching of this passage?

In order to understand the full import of these verses under consideration, it becomes necessary for us to look at the occasion which gave rise to the message recorded in John 5. According to John 5: 1-9, the Lord Jesus healed a crippled man who was waiting for the stirring of the waters of the pool of Bethesda. Jesus said to him, “Arise, take up thy bed, and walk” (vs. 8). Christ commanded him to do that which he could not possibly have done by his own strength. Our Lord’s commands are His enablings. With this command went forth the strength which empowered the man to execute it. He heard the audible tones of our Lord and at the same time, by faith, appropriated the message. Acting upon the spoken word he arose in the power which Christ supplied and walked. His faith made him whole.

The Jews objected to Christ’s healing on the sabbath day. According to their theology He had violated the law prohibiting work on the Sabbath. His disregard for their conception of sabbath work was to them a guarantee that He was not a man of God.

A little later in the temple the healed man brought the Jews to Jesus and identified Him as the one who had cured him. They began to persecute Jesus and to debate with Him concerning His good deed done to the impotent man.

It is natural that the occasion which gave rise to the discussion would be reflected in the choice of words and phraseology; hence we hear Jesus saying, according to verse 24, “Verily, verily, I

say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." The man had heard Jesus speak and believed Him; hence he acted according to his faith and was healed. In the same manner the one who hears the word of Jesus and believes the One who sent the Lord has eternal life—a present possession and not a prospect of it. This statement is confirmed by the last clause of the verse: "but hath passed out of death into life." The significance of the perfect tense confirms in this clause the statement that the believer has at the present time eternal life. Having by faith received this life, he has already passed out of death into this condition of life. The negative side of this proposition is likewise stated in the words, "and cometh not into judgment." This statement assures the believer that he will not be brought into judgment for trial. Sentence was passed upon him at Calvary in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who became his substitute.

The promises contained in verse 24 are made a little more definite in verses 25-27:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself; and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man."

The reader is to note the expression, "The hour cometh, and now is." This statement shows that the Lord was not speaking about some future time of resurrection but the present time. This same expression is found in 4: 23, 24:

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth."

In view of these two statements we see that the expression hour indicates the present dispensation. During this age "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Since Jesus was talking about the present era and the preaching of the gospel to those who are dead (in sin), we may be certain that He was not using the word "live" in the sense of a physical resurrection. Undoubtedly He was speaking of the impartation of the divine life which He communicates to those who accept Him. In verses 26 and 27 Christ explained the basis for

His assertion to which we have just given attention. "For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man." In this passage Jesus was thinking of Himself as "a son of man," and was ignoring the fact that he was God in human form. The Jews were simply thinking of and dealing with Him as a man. Taking their estimate of Him, Jesus declared that the Father had communicated to Him the same kind of life which the former possesses—namely, eternal, self-existing life. Therefore he as a son of man can communicate the same kind of life to those who hear His words and who accept them. Thus in verses 24-27 inclusive our Lord was speaking of the impartation of the new life to the believer. As stated above, the choice of His phraseology was determined by circumstances connected with the miracle which had just been performed.

Jesus followed this explanation concerning spiritual matters with the exhortation "Marvel not at this" (vs. 28). At what? According to John's usage and the flow of thought, this sentence refers to the new life imparted to the believer. As explained, however, in verse 24 the reception of this new life and power is the guarantee and pledge of exemption from future judgment and also of a resurrection into life. Therefore Jesus said, "Marvel not at this" for I am going to tell you about the future resurrection of all the dead, "for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." The Son of man has power not only to impart spiritual life to the believers at the present time but also has authority and power to bring all the dead back to life again, "for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Are we to understand from this passage that all who are in the tombs will come forth within the period of sixty minutes? Is this a prediction of a general judgment into which all, both the wicked and the righteous, will be brought?

The question just asked can be answered only by the proper understanding of the word "hour." We have already seen in John 4:23 that this word is used as a synonym for the entire Christian dispensation. This fact is clearly seen by the context in which it appears. In chapter 5:25 we learned that "hour" likewise was used as a synonym for the entire Christian era. From these

two examples we see that this word can refer to a long period of time. If this is its significance in these two instances, it is possible that such may be its meaning in verse 28. We should not resort, however, to this meaning unless there is warrant for our doing so.

Applying our fundamental rule of interpreting all language according to the literal, usual meaning, we would understand the word "hour" in this passage to indicate a period of sixty minutes but we are also to remember it may mean a period of time, such as the Christian dispensation. We must select that significance which accords with all the facts, not only of this one context but also of all Scripture teaching. As we have already seen, John in Revelation 20 taught that at the second coming of our Lord for His saints the dead in Christ shall be raised. When He resumes His journey all the way to the earth and mounts the throne of David, He establishes His reign of righteousness which will endure for one thousand years. At the conclusion of that period Satan, who is bound at the beginning of the millennium, is unloosed for a little time during which he will stir up rebellion against Christ. These revolting peoples will be destroyed by miraculous fire coming down out of heaven. Then Satan will be cast into the lake of fire where are also the beast and the false prophet. Following the incarceration of Satan there is, according to 20: 11-15, established the judgment of the Great White Throne before which all of the wicked dead will be brought for the pronouncement of sentence. According to the narrative, therefore, there will be two resurrections; one before the thousand years, and one following it. This position is confirmed by Revelation 20: 5, "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection."

Since Revelation 20 teaches two resurrections separated by a thousand year interval, we must select that interpretation of John 5: 28, 29 which accords with this passage. In the light of this fact then we say that the period called "hour" in John 5: 28 can cover at least as long a period as it does in verse 25 and in John 4: 23. We are logically forced to the conclusion that the resurrection unto life mentioned by Jesus is that which precedes the thousand years and the resurrection of condemnation that which follows the millennium.

A second passage that is very frequently cited as proof that, when our Lord returns, He delivers up the kingdom to God the

Father is 1 Corinthians 15: 23, 24. The conclusion from this misinterpretation of the passage is that there will be no millennial reign of Christ when He returns. It becomes necessary, therefore, for us to investigate this passage.

“For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then they that are Christ’s, at his coming. Then *cometh* the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject all things unto him. And when all things have been subjected unto him then shall the Son also himself be subjected unto him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15: 21-28).

The heart of this great passage is found in verses 23 and 24. In verse 21 Paul showed that by Adam’s transgression sin entered the world and caused death. In the same manner by the one act of righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, resurrection from the dead has been made possible. Adam’s sin brought universal death; Christ’s act of obedience brought universal resurrection. These facts are further set forth by Paul in verse 22. In verse 23 he shows the order of the resurrection: “Christ the first-fruits.” Our Lord’s triumph over death occurred over nineteen hundred years ago. The second installment of the resurrection will be “they that are Christ’s at his coming.” According to verse 24, “Then *cometh* the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . .” Let us notice that in verse 23 Paul speaks of Christ’s resurrection and follows that statement by “then they that are Christ’s, at his coming.” The adverb “then” covers, as we know, a period of nineteen hundred years. About this position there can be no dispute. What is the significance of “Then” found in verse 24? If the first “then” covers nineteen hundred years, is it not logical for us to believe that the second “Then” may cover as long a period of time? This question demands an affirmative answer. Since we have learned from the book of Revelation that our Lord reigns upon earth a thousand years when He returns, then we must interpret this passage in harmony with the teaching of Revelation 20. Therefore we are forced, without any equivocation, to the conclusion that the word “Then” in verse 24 covers the great millennial era.

That the Greek adverb translated “then” in these instances indicates an enumeration of events is clear from the statement which

Thayer makes: "As in classic Greek, it stands in enumeration, to mark a sequence depending either on temporal succession, as Mark 4:28 . . . ; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 . . . ; 1 Corinthians 15:24 . . . ; 1 Timothy 2:13; or on the nature of the things enumerated, 1 Corinthians 12:28." An examination of the passages referred to by Thayer shows conclusively that the adverb in the original language here used together with its strengthened form, which appears in verse 24, is employed for enumeration of events either in temporal sequence or on the basis of the natural importance.

Since this passage must harmonize with all others and since Revelation 20 teaches that there will be two resurrections separated by a period of a thousand years, during which our Lord reigns upon the earth, we must interpret this passage in harmony with the other revelation. With the facts in mind which I have just stated it is clearly seen that there is perfect agreement between this passage and the teaching of our Lord concerning His millennial reign as set forth in Matthew 25:31-46.

In this chapter we have seen, therefore, that when our Lord returns in glory He will sit upon His mighty throne and separate the living nations who survive the Great Tribulation. Those put upon His right hand and represented by the sheep are the ones who have been very kind to His brethren. Their feelings and actions toward His people are simply an index revealing their attitude toward Christ. They will see that He is the Son of God and Savior of the world and accept Him. To them He will give life eternal. They will reign with Him during this thousand-year period of a glorious, righteous rule over the earth.

But the wicked, represented by the goats, will go off into everlasting punishment. That this punishment is everlasting has been proved by the meaning of the word *aīdōnios*, "forever" applied to God and to Christ. Without doubt, in view of all the facts, there is such an institution as eternal punishment. Though this doctrine is distasteful to the majority of people and though we cannot understand all of its implications, the one who knows God and who loves His Word must accept this teaching and await the future to understand all the particulars.

## SUMMARY

In this discourse we have learned a number of things relative to the future. Our Lord's prediction concerning the destruction of the temple called forth two interrogations, both of which He answered. Matthew, however, gave His reply to the second question only, which is: "What is the sign of thy coming and of the consummation of the age?" In Matthew 24:6 Jesus covered the entire Christian dispensation and warned the disciples not to jump at hasty conclusions with reference to the end of the age. According to His prediction the disciples were to expect wars and political upheavals during His absence, since the conditions which produce them exist. Hence a war, affirmed Jesus, would not be indicative of the closing of the age, since this dispensation is to be characterized by local wars in different parts of the world.

But the infallible sign of the end of the age is a world war attended by famines, pestilences, great earthquakes in divers places.

Our Lord warned His disciples that the generation witnessing such a world-catastrophe would see the fulfilment of all the predictions made in the discourse.

The coming mentioned in verse 32 is the rapture of the saints prior to the Great Tribulation. After the removal of the saints from their earthly environment the judgments of the Tribulation fall upon the world.

During the Tribulation there will be the mightiest revival which the world has ever seen. It will be conducted by the Jewish evangelists to whom now the Church should be giving the gospel, losing no time.

At the conclusion of the Tribulation our Lord will come in glory and will set up His kingdom of righteousness upon the earth and will reign from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

## CAUTION

As a final word in this book I wish to throw out a caution. Many sincere and godly men have been very positive in the past concerning the nearness of the end of the age and the second coming of our Lord. They have studied what they considered all of the evidence and have drawn their conclusions that the coming of the Lord was at hand. With fervency they have proclaimed their convictions. All man-made schedules for the Lord's coming have been discredited by actual history. In view of the fact that we are all fallible, it behooves us to be very careful in our study and teaching of prophetic truth as well as of other subjects presented in the Scriptures.

I wish to state that I am sending forth this book, believing in the depths of my heart that I have placed the correct interpretation on the words of our Lord in this apocalyptic sermon. If a proper, grammatical, historical, and logical exegesis is to be relied upon, then I feel that the conclusions which I have advanced are sound and Scriptural—namely, that Jesus pointed to a world war attended by famines, pestilences, earthquakes as the infallible sign of the end of the age.

There may be a question in the minds of some, however, as to whether the world war of 1914-1918 was the one referred to by our Lord. In conclusion let me say that, to my mind, that catastrophe literally met every requirement of the prediction and filled out the complete picture. Since I, like all other men, am not infallible, it is possible that I have made the wrong identification. Of course, I do not think so. I am, however, open to conviction and desire further light on this and on all other subjects found in the Word of God.

Let us who know the Lord hold firmly to the faith once for all delivered to the saints and study the prophetic Word as well as all other portions of the Oracles of God. May each of us refrain from dogmatism concerning subjects which are not completely and plainly stated in the Word of God. May we seek and pray for further light on all subjects and then have the courage of our convictions to proclaim what we see in the Word, giving forth the message of life in love. Let us present a solid phalanx to Satan and the forces of evil in these closing days.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold  
Wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119: 18).

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