

STUDY XII

OUR LORD'S GREAT PROPHECY

MATT. 24; MARK 13; LUKE 21:5-36; 17:20-37

Importance of This Prophecy--The Conditions and Three Questions which Called It Forth--Beware of False Christs--A Brief Historic Foreview of Eighteen Centuries--The Trouble in the Close of the Jewish Age and that Closing the Gospel Age, Blended in the Language of all the Evangelists--The Abomination of Desolation--Flee to the Mountain--Those with Child, etc.--Before Winter and the Sabbath--Lo Here! Lo There! Believe them not--The Tribulation of Those Days--The Darkening of the Sun and Moon as Signs--The Falling of the Stars--Symbolic Fulfilments Also--The Sign of the Son of Man--What the Tribes of Earth Shall See--The Fig Tree--"This Generation"--Watch!--"As in the Days of Noah, They Knew not"--Remember Lot's Wife--One Taken and Another Left--The Elect to be Gathered to the Truth--Satan's Household to be Broken Up--Provisions for Feeding the Household of Faith.

OUR Lord uttered one of the most remarkable prophecies of Holy Writ respecting the "Time of the End"--the closing epoch of this Gospel age. It was uttered near the close of his earthly ministry, when he was endeavoring to prepare his disciples gradually for the new dispensation, which would be fully introduced after the tragedy of Calvary. He wished them to understand that they must not expect immediately the honors and glories of the Kingdom, which he had promised should be shared by his faithful. Before these glories and blessings, would come trials and sufferings. He, their master, the King, must be rejected of Israel and be crucified, in harmony with the prophetic declarations, then

Israel would be given over to their enemies, and their holy city and costly temple be utterly destroyed: moreover, his disciples must not expect to be above their Master, exempt from the reproaches and sufferings that fell on him; but

that faithfulness to him and his teachings would cause them to be hated of all men for his sake; but that finally, though after much tribulation, those faithful unto death would be rewarded, when he would come again to receive them unto himself and to a share of his glory.

Teaching along this line our Lord reserved until near the close of his ministry. At first the disciples were disposed to resent this, and to insist (as some do today) that the Lord's cause must conquer the world, as a result of their preaching; and Peter went so far as to express the dissent to our Lord, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this [death and the scattering of thy people and the triumph of evil generally] shall not be unto thee." (*Matt. 16:22; Mark 8:31,32*) But our Lord severely rebuked Peter; and all of the disciples seem to have gradually settled down to a realization that the glories of the Kingdom were still remote, and that the Master must go away, and, leaving them, send the Comforter, the holy Spirit, to guide and keep them until he would come again in the glory of the Father's Kingdom.

It was in this attitude of mind and with our Lord's latest expression with reference to the temple, still ringing in their ears, that the disciples sought from the Master definite information on these points which were not yet clear in their minds.

The Three Questions

"And as Jesus sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us (1) When shall these things [the destruction of the Temple, etc.] be? and (2)

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What shall be the sign of thy presence* and (3) of the end of the world [age]?" *Matt. 24:3*

Undoubtedly the opportunity and the questions were of divine providence; for the prophecy was surely meant more for the instruction of God's people living in this "harvest" time, than for those who asked the questions. In studying this prophecy it is very necessary to keep in memory the questions to which it is the inspired answer. The prophecy is given with much similarity by three of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke; but since Matthew's is the most complete and orderly, we follow its narrative in general, bringing forward any modifications noted in the other accounts.

Beware of False Christs

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." *Matt. 24:4,5*

Gamaliel mentions two of these false Christs in his speech referred to in *Acts 5:36,37*; and history tells us of several others who deceived quite a few Jews. Most notable among these was Sabbathai Levi, of Smyrna, who announced himself A.D. 1648. Sabbathai Levi styled himself "The firstborn Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of Israel," and promised a restoration of the kingdom and prosperity. Sabbathai, says the historian, "prevailed there [in Smyrna] to such a degree that some of his followers prophesied and fell into strange ecstasies: four hundred men and women prophesied of his growing kingdom. The people acted for a time as those possessed by spirits; some fell into trances, foamed at the mouth, recounted their future prosperity,

*The Greek word *parousia*, here used, invariably signifies *presence*, and not *coming*. See Revised Version--margin; also the *Emphatic Diaglott*.

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their visions of the Lion of Judah, and the triumphs of Sabbathai." This was undoubtedly Satan's counterfeit fulfilment of Joel's prophecy (2:29)--a counterfeit of the holy Spirit witnessed also in religious revivals of more modern times. Altogether, there have probably been fifty or more false Christs, male and female, and many of them undoubtedly demented--possessed of evil spirits. But none of these, nor all of them together, can be said to have "deceived many." Yet it is against the kind which "*deceive many*" that our Lord cautions us here, and again, later on in his prophecy, in which connection we will examine particularly the antichrists which have deceived many.

The History of Eighteen Centuries Briefly Foretold

--*Matt. 24:6-13; Mark 13:7-13; Luke 21:9-19*--

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumors [threats, intrigues] of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation

shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are primary sorrows."

Matt. 24:6-8

Thus briefly did our Lord summarize secular history, and teach the disciples not to expect very soon his second coming and glorious Kingdom. And how aptly: surely the world's history is just this--an account of wars, intrigues, famines and pestilences--little else. Our Lord separates the history of the true Church and states it with similar brevity, thus:

"Then [during that same period, the Gospel age] they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations [peoples] for my name's sake. And then [during that same period] many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets [teachers] shall rise and

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shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." ***Matt. 24:9-13***

In the light of history would it be possible to portray the course of God's true Church in fewer words? Surely not. The likeness is perfect. "Whosoever will live godly shall suffer persecution," is the Apostle's declaration; and whoever has not shared it has every reason to doubt his relationship to God as a son. (***Heb. 12:8***) And so with the Church as a whole, when not persecuted by the Ishmael and Esau class, it has been because there was so much of the spirit of the world or so much of "cold love" toward the Lord and his truth that they were not worthy of persecution. But judged by this same standard, and by our Lord's prophecy, there have been some faithful unto death all the way down through this Gospel age--a "little flock."

The Gospel Witness, World-Wide

--Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10--

"And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. Then shall the end come."

Here again our Lord clearly showed the disciples that the end of the age was much farther off than they had supposed;

that the message of his Kingdom was to be good tidings, not to Israel only, but to all nations. But this did not imply that other nations would receive the gospel which Israel had rejected. Rather, we should expect just what we find, that as the god of this world blinded Israel, so he would blind the vast majorities of other nations, and hinder them from seeing in Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God--and he has. (*1 Cor. 1:24*) If only a remnant of Israel (specially instructed for centuries under the Law) was found worthy to be of the "royal priesthood," what more could be reasonably expected of the heathen nations, long "without God and having no hope"?

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It is well that we carefully note our Lord's words--that the gospel was not to be preached to the nations to *convert the nations*, but as a *witness to the nations*, and to call, and perfect, and gather out of all nations "the elect." Later on "the elect," as the Kingdom, will bless the nations, opening their deaf ears to the gospel, and their blinded eyes to the True Light.

This *witness* has already been given: the word of the Lord, the gospel of the Kingdom, has been published to every nation of earth. Each individual has not heard it; but that is not the statement of the prophecy. It was to be, and has been, a national proclamation. And *the end has come!* "The harvest is *the end* of the age," our Lord explained. (*Matt. 13:39*) Some have been disposed to query whether or not this prediction has yet been fulfilled, because the missionaries who have gone into heathen lands have very generally known little or nothing of the good tidings particularly specified by our Lord--"the good tidings of the *Kingdom*." But we answer, the printed gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have gone to them brimming full of the Kingdom tidings, just as we have them.

Thus our Lord briefly summed up the eighteen centuries of trials and persecutions upon his Church, and the fruit of their labor in successfully witnessing to all nations, and hastened on to answer the important query respecting how the living would know of the time and the fact of his *second presence*. He ignored the question respecting when the stones of the temple would all be overthrown, lest they should associate that event with his second coming, and because he wished to so associate the trouble upon fleshly Israel in the overthrow of its polity with the trouble upon nominal spiritual Israel in the end of this age, as type and antitype.

It was with evident intention on God's part, though unknown to the Evangelists, that the record of our Lord's

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prophecy at this point is given piecemeal--here a part and there another; here a reference to the typical trouble on typical Israel in the close of the typical harvest, there a reference to the similar though more general and greater trouble in the end of this age upon antitypical Israel--Christendom. Truly the prophets declared of our Lord that he opened his mouth in parables and dark sayings, and "without a parable spake he not unto them." Yet in harmony with the divine intention, the dark sayings and parables are now becoming luminous to all whose eyes are anointed with the true eye-salve.

The Trouble in the End of the Jewish Age

Luke's account of the trouble upon fleshly Israel which culminated A.D. 70, is the clearest, so we introduce it here:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon *this people*. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Luke 21:20-24

This portion of our Lord's prophecy evidently related to events upon fleshly Israel; and history tells us that it was accurately fulfilled in every particular in the troublous scenes wherewith the Jewish age and polity came to an end.

"These be the days of vengeance upon this nation, that all things written in the law and the prophets concerning them might be fulfilled."

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But our Lord's words quoted by Matthew and Mark differ from the foregoing, and evidently apply to the trouble upon spiritual Israel in the end of the Gospel age. Undoubtedly our Lord uttered both statements, but the Evangelists not knowing of the two harvests and two times of trouble, but considering them practically repetitions did not record both statements--the Lord so overruling, for the purpose of covering or hiding the facts respecting this harvest until his due time for revealing it.

The Trouble in the End of the Gospel Age

Matthew's and Mark's accounts here are almost identical. Matthew says:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand): then let them that be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to those that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in winter, neither on the Sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." *Matt. 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20*

Four points in this narrative show that while it may have had a typical application to the trouble in the end of the Jewish age, its real or most important application belongs to the trouble with which the Gospel age terminates. (1) The reference to the "desolating abomination" mentioned in Daniel's prophecy. (2) The statement that the trouble will be the *most severe* the world has ever known or will ever experience. (3) That unless the carnage were cut short there

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would be *no flesh saved*. (4) The context succeeding unquestionably describes events at the end of the Gospel age-- events which could not be applied to the end or harvest of the Jewish age, and were not fulfilled there. Two of these

points deserve special examination.

The prophet *Daniel (9:27)* did record that after Messiah would be "cut off" in the midst of the seventieth week of covenant favor, he, by establishing the antitypical sacrifices of atonement, would cause the sacrifices and oblations of the Law to cease: and that then, because *abominations would prevail, he would pour destruction upon the desolate* (rejected nation), *as God had previously decreed.*

All this had its fulfilment in the destruction of fleshly Israel's polity. From the time our Lord said, "Your house is left unto you *desolate*"--"ye shall see me no more until *that day* when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah," their religion became an abomination, an empty form, a mark of their repudiation of the *one sacrifice* for sins which God had provided; and resting under the curse they had invoked upon themselves (blindness--*Matt. 27:25*), their course toward destruction was rapid, as God had decreed and foretold.

But Daniel's prophecy has much to say about an *Abomination that maketh Desolate* in nominal spiritual Israel; which was set up in power representatively in Papacy, and which has exercised a great and baneful influence of spiritual desolation in the spiritual house or temple of God, the Church of Christ. This abominable system of error was to continue until the cleansing of the sanctuary class; and beyond that it was to prosper greatly and lead many in nominal spiritual Israel to repudiate the *ransom-sacrifice*, given once for all; and the result of its overspreading influence would be the desolation of rejected Christendom. See *Daniel 11:31; 12:11*; and *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, Vol. III, Chap. 4.

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The great abomination of desolation whose foundation rests in the doctrine of the Mass (which substitutes human performances instead of the great sacrifice of Calvary, for the cleansing away of sin) is now being supplemented by theories of self-atonement, and these overspreading abominations are backed by such influence and sophistry as will deceive many--"if it were possible the very elect," and be precursors of the destruction of Christendom.

Looking back we see in this another parallelism between the end of the Jewish harvest and the end of the Gospel harvest. Fleshly Israel's rejection of the true sacrifice for sins, and their retention of the typical sacrifices which were no longer acceptable to God, but abominations, was an important incident in connection with their national and ecclesiastical

fall. So here, the rejection of the doctrine of the *ransom* and the acceptance of either masses or good works or penances instead, is abomination in God's sight and is an important incident in connection with the fall of Christendom, civil and ecclesiastical.

As already pointed out *the* abomination of desolation which defiled God's holy place or true temple, the Church, was the papal one, the cornerstone of which is the blasphemous doctrine of the Mass. The abomination, defilement and desolation are old; but so gross was the darkness of error during centuries past that few, if any, could *see* it. That the Mass was not seen to be the abomination, even by the Reformers, is evident: for although the Church of England in her Articles denies the power of the priests to create Christ out of bread and wine, to sacrifice him afresh, yet we have no intimation that the enormity of this sinful practice was seen. And Luther, while full of denunciation for many of Papacy's sins and falsities, did not *see* the great abomination of desolation to be the Mass. On the contrary, on his

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return to his church after his stay at Wartburg castle, finding that the Mass, as well as images and candles, had been discontinued, as being without Scriptural authority, Luther re-established the Mass.

In this view of the matter there is great significance in our Lord's words--"When therefore ye *see* the abomination of the desolation *having* stood in the holy place, as foretold by Daniel the Prophet (reader consider): "Then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains." Here we must remember the parallelism between the two harvests, the two times of trouble and the two flights; and must consider that Judea would represent Christendom of today.

The Greek word rendered "mountains" may with equal or greater propriety be rendered in the singular--mountain: and it is so rendered in a majority of instances in the Common Version. Indeed, to flee *out of Judea* (literal) to either a mountain or many mountains seems peculiar since Judea was in fact "a hill country," and Jerusalem is described as set in the top of the mountains. But to apply our Lord's words to the present time, and to his people in Christendom, who now, in the light of present truth, *see* the Abomination stand where it ought not--in the holy place--in the stead of the true sacrifice, is a very simple matter. They should at once flee from the influence of the abomination and from the system falsely styling itself Christ's

(mountain) kingdom, to the true mountain or Kingdom, which at this time Christ has returned to set up in glory and power.

But to leave Christendom, repudiating her temples, her forms of godliness, her social enchantments, her flatteries and honors, and to brave her denunciations and anathemas and her various powers of boycott, and to flee to the Lord and the true Kingdom, repudiated, ignored and denied by

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the worldly-wise and worldly-good, is surely quite a flight, quite a journey; and few but the "saints" will even think of starting on it. The perils of the way are portrayed by our Lord in a manner that would seem overdrawn and contrary to his usual custom if applicable only to the physical sufferings of the believers who fled from Judea in the close of the Jewish harvest: but his words are manifestly appropriate to the spiritual flight and trials of this harvest time. In a word, this command to flee, and the description of its trials, can only be properly understood in connection with the command of *Revelation (18:4)*, "Come out of her, my people, so that you may have no fellowship with her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues."

"Come Out of Her, My People!"

"Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him that is in the field return back to take his clothes." *Matt. 24:17,18*

These statements indicate the propriety of haste in flight out of "Babylon," as soon as each *sees* the abomination of desolation. The Lord's word is, that all temporizing or parleying or human reasoning will be dangerous: no time must be lost in *obeying* as soon as he causes us to see the abomination of Babylon, and its relationship to all who have named his name. Alas! how many, failing to heed the Master's word, have suffered themselves to be bound hand and foot, so that now flight is almost impossible. But the Master says, "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me."

There is another lesson in these verses: they show that some of the Lord's people are in one place or condition, and some in another. Some are in the "field"; that is in the world outside all human organizations: these should not think it proper first to join the nominal churches; but using

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their liberty should flee from their position in the world, to become one with the Lord as members of his Kingdom--mountain.

Some of the Lord's people are in the houses or church systems of Babylon--but, as here intimated, they are generally house-top saints, who have a higher life and experience and faith than merely nominal church members. These in their flight are not to go down into the house (nominal church systems) to seek to carry with them their "stuff"; their valuables in human estimation, such as titles, dignities, respect, commendations of good and regular standing, etc., but are to *forsake all* for Christ, and flee to the true Kingdom.

Difficulties of the Flight

"And woe unto them that are with child, and them that give suck in those days!" *Matt. 24:19*

There are spiritual "babes," as well as fleshly babes, and bastards as well as sons. The Apostle Paul describes his interest in gospel work as that of a mother travailing with child. He says, "O my little children, [because] of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." (*Gal. 4:19*) Similarly all faithful servants of Christ, all earnest laborers for souls, are such as are described in this text as being "with child." Spiritual child-bearing after the apostolic example is most honorable service, and engages the attention of some of God's most devoted children. But alas! as the desire of Abraham and Sarah to help fulfil God's promises led to an unauthorized *method*, and produced an Ishmael class, which, born after the flesh, persecuted the seed born legitimately, so is it with many of these who now are "with child"; they are helping to produce illegitimate "children of God." It should be remembered by all, however, that only legitimate means should be employed: all the

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children of God are begotten by the word and spirit of the truth, and not by human theory and spirit of the world.

False views of the divine plan (the supposition that all except the elect Church will be everlastingly tormented) have in some so stimulated their desires to bring forth "children"

that they have resorted to various human devices for begetting them--overlooking the fact that all not "begotten of God," all not begotten "by the word of truth"--(not merely of the letter of the Word, but "begotten of the spirit" of the truth), are spurious, and not reckoned as of God nor treated as sons. (*Heb. 12:8*) As a consequence the Church nominal of today makes "a fair show in the flesh"--numerically, financially, intellectually--and has much of "the *form* of godliness" without its real spirit and power to control the heart.

It is full of "babes," some indeed babes in Christ, but many, many bastards, not sons of God; begotten of error instead of truth--"tares." And the constant effort is to bring forth *more* even of the spurious progeny--hoping thus to save them from eternal torment, the unjust sentence of a supposed merciless God.

Alas! how difficult it is for these dear children of God who are thus figuratively, in our Savior's words, "with child," to flee from the nominal church system with its multitudinous machinery for false and rapid begetting, which they have learned to glory in and to boast of. Yes, it will be difficult for these to leave all and flee to the Lord and his mountain (Kingdom). It will be difficult for them to believe that the Lord is really good and just and merciful, and that he has a gracious plan which makes full provision for every member of Adam's race--all redeemed by the great "ransom for all."

The class which gives "suck" in these days also contains many noble, good, well-meaning children of God. It includes

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many ministers and Sunday School teachers--whose religious work consists in giving out "milk"; not always the "pure milk of the Word," however, for they generally dilute and adulterate it with tradition, philosophy and worldly-wisdom opiates, which keep their "babes" docile, sleepy, "good"; and hinder their *growth in knowledge* and grace, which they have come to consider dangerous.

Some few of these teachers do indeed endeavor to give the "pure milk of the word" that their "babes" may grow thereby and learn to eat and assimilate the strong meat and come to manhood in Christ, but repeated experiments they declare *prove* to them that even the "pure milk of the word" will not agree with the majority of their "babes"; and hence they consider it duty to adulterate the milk lest their "babes" sicken and die. Ah! they do not recognize that the majority of their "babes," not being begotten of the spirit of

the truth, never will be able to assimilate *spiritual* "milk"; because "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he appreciate them, because they are of spiritual appreciation." (*1 Cor. 2:14,12*) Neither do they see that this failure to discriminate is *starving*, stunting and poisoning the true spiritual "babes" under their care-- who "for the time ought to be teachers." *Heb. 5:12*

So many of this class as are true children of God will hear the call, "Come out of her my people," and will also have great difficulty in this day. As they come to see present truth they will not only fear to give it to those under their care, but they will also fear to act upon it themselves, lest it separate them from their charges. They will fear to flee in this day; realizing that but few of their "babes" would be able or willing to join in the flight; and indeed only the spiritual will be able to endure the ordeal. Some will pass the crisis in safety as "overcomers"; while others, fearful, will be left to come through the great tribulation.

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Flee Before the Wintertime

"But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter (neither on the Sabbath day)--because then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days be cut short there should no flesh be saved: but through [by] the elect those days shall be cut short." *Matt. 24:20-22*

This gathering of the Church occurs in what is called a "harvest" time, at the close of a summertime of favor. Our Lord explained (*Matt. 13:30,37-43*) that in this harvest he would garner his wheat and burn the tares in a great time of trouble following. It is still the custom in country places to leave the burning off of refuse until the winter. We understand our Lord to mean, then, that we are to seek help and strength to escape from Babylon before the wintertime of her trouble comes upon her.

We are to remember that there are to be two classes of wheat saved in this harvest--contrary to nature though it be. (1) The "overcomers," the faithful and promptly obedient who get out before "winter" and are "accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass." (*Luke 21:36*) (2) Those loyal, but not promptly obedient children of God, overcharged, with zeal not according to

knowledge, and more or less contaminated with the spirit of the world. These will be helped out of Babylon when she is falling, and will flee in the wintertime, saying in the words of the Prophet, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended [winter has come], and we are not saved." (*Jer. 8:20*) The Lord very graciously indicates that all the truly loyal of these shall ultimately "come up out of great tribulation" and be before the throne (not in the throne with the "little flock" who inherit the Kingdom as joint-heirs with Christ), having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. (*Rev. 7:14,15*)

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Let us pray, and labor accordingly, that we be through our flight before the "winter" of trouble comes.

We are to pray and strive that our flight be not even on the Sabbath day. What Sabbath day? Not the Seventh day of the week, nor the First day; for "new moons and Sabbaths" surely would prove no hindrance to Christians in any physical flight. (*Col. 2:16*) The Sabbath meant is the great antitypical Sabbath--the Millennium, the Seventh-thousand-year Sabbath. If we got started on our flight before it began chronologically, so much the more favorable: and the farther we get into it the more difficult it will be to get free and to abandon Babylon, at the very time it needs and pleads most for our help to sustain it. But God has declared that Babylon must fall, and no power can sustain her: and no one who realizes how imperfect is her work, and how good and gracious will be the work of the Lord after she is removed and the true Church glorified, could wish to hinder the Lord's work for one moment.

The great tribulation of this "winter" time is to be unprecedented; and our Lord's assurance is, that nothing to compare with it has or shall ever come upon the world. This positively identifies his language with the trouble at the close of this Gospel age of which the prophet says, "At that time shall Michael [Christ] stand up [assume control]... and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (*Dan. 12:1*) It identifies it also with the period mentioned in *Revelation (11:17,18)* when "the nations were angry and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged." So great will this trouble be that without some intervening power to cut it short the entire race would eventually be exterminated. But God has prepared the intervening power--His Kingdom, Christ and his Church--"the elect." The elect will intervene at the proper time and bring order out of earth's confusion.

False Messiahs and False Teachers

"If any man shall say unto you *then*, Lo here is Messiah, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Messiahs, and false teachers, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. Remember I have foretold you." ***Matt. 24:23-25***

The deceivers here described certainly are not the fanatics who from time to time have claimed to be Christ and have deceived but few possessed of any degree of common sense and judgment. We have already pointed out *the* Antichrist, the great deceiver, the Papacy,* which for centuries sat in the spiritual temple, displaying himself as the only representative of Christ--his vicegerent--concerning whom our Lord correctly foretold, that all the world would wonder respecting him, *except* those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (***Rev. 13:8***) Similarly, the Church of England is not merely a church or "body" but it has an earthly head in the civil sovereign, the Queen. The Greek Catholic Church very similarly, though not so particularly, has for its head the Czar of Russia--who nevertheless *exercises* more power. If Papacy is Antichrist, a pseudo or false Christ, are not the other false bodies with false heads also false Christs, or Antichrists--however many or few of God's true saints may be in them?

Various Protestant denominations, although they acknowledge no head except Christ, nevertheless practically make their Synods, Conferences and Councils into *heads*, from which they take their laws, usages, and confessions of faith, instead of the one only head of the one true Church.

For a large period and to a greater or less extent these systems of men have so counterfeited the genuine Messiah (head and body) as to partially deceive many. But now for

*Vol. II, Chap. 9.

a century past these deceptions are failing. Few Presbyterians, if any, now believe theirs *the* one true Church; neither do Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans and others so think of their systems; and even Anglican, Greek and Roman

Catholics are getting free from the delusion that theirs is the only Church, outside of which are none of the elect. But in the prophecy under consideration our Lord warns us of danger from false Christs "then"--that is *now*. In harmony with this we find in **Revelation (13:14-18)** a prophecy of a special combination of influence by which Protestant denominations will be unified and, though separate, yet be brought into cooperation with Papacy, in a manner that will give both increased powers, and deceive many into supposing that the new combination will be God's instrumentality for doing the work predicted of Messiah--and that it is thus his representative.

"The Sun of Righteousness Shall Arise"

"Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: or behold he is in the secret chamber; believe it not. For as the bright-shiner [the Sun] cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West, so shall also the *presence* [Greek *parousia*] of the Son of Man be."

Matt. 24:26,27

That great delusions, "strong delusions" by Satan, are just before us, is witnessed not only by our Lord's words here, but also by the Apostle Paul. (**2 Thess. 2:10-12**) Had it been foretold precisely what form these deceptions would take, this would have somewhat hindered their deceptive power. God permits these deceptions for the very purpose of *separating* the "overcomers" from all others, and merely guarantees us that the "elect" will be kept from falling. And yet it is quite possible that some of these trials, siftings and delusions, may come *closest* upon those possessing the largest

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degree of the light of present truth. How all-important it is that we "keep ourselves in the love of God"; that we have not only a knowledge of the truth which *alone* might merely puff up, but that additionally we have the spirit of Christ, which it should produce--love to God and to each other and sympathy for all men; for "love buildeth up" character in likeness of our Lord.

The claim, "Behold he is in the secret chamber," is already being made by Spiritists--that they can have face-to-face interviews with the Lord at some of their seances; and that all who are in sympathy with their views may have the

same privilege, etc. What if the caution that, if it were possible, it would deceive the very elect, should be found to mean that the "very elect" will be subjected to the severest trials in this evil day? "Who shall be able to stand?" (*Rev. 6:17*) The answer through the Prophet is, "He that hath clean hands [an honest life] and a pure heart [a conscience void of offense toward God and man]:...he shall ascend into the mountain [Kingdom] of the Lord...and stand in the holy place." *Psa. 24:3,4*

But how shall God's people know assuredly that these manifestations are not genuine? He has instructed us that his day will come as a thief in the night, that he will be *present* unseen by the world superintending the harvest work--gathering his elect, etc. How do we know that he will not manifest himself to his watching people, as so-called Christian Spiritualists claim, in the "secret apartments"--in their seances?

We know that he will not so manifest himself to us, because --(1) his instructions are that we shall be "changed," made "like him," and *thus* "see him as he is"; and (2) he forewarned us against these deceptions which would propose to show him to us in our unchanged or flesh condition saying, "If they shall say he is in a desert place or in secret

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apartments, *believe it not*"; because in no such manner will he be manifested. On the contrary, "As the bright-shiner [the Sun] cometh out of the East [and can neither be confined to a solitary place nor to a private room], but shineth [*everywhere*] even unto the [remote] West, so shall the *presence* of the Son of Man be."

Our Lord's revelation at his second presence will not be in a room, nor to a community in a wilderness or desert place; nor even to one nation as at the first advent; but it will be a general world-wide manifestation: "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams." It is the searching beam of truth from the great Sun of Righteousness that already causes so much confusion amongst men, by shining into the dark places and discovering error and corruption of every kind. Whatsoever doth make manifest is light. And it is the great Light of the world, Christ (and ultimately also his associated Church), that shall bless mankind by bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness; for nothing is hidden that shall not be made manifest. "The *day* shall declare it"; and there could be no day without the Sun shining from the East even unto

the West. "This is the true light which lighteth [in due time] every man that cometh into the world."

(We will examine **Matt. 24:28**, as the conclusion of verse 41 to make Matthew's account correspond with those of Mark and Luke.)

The Darkening of the Sun and Moon as Signs

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." **Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24,25**

The tribulation "*of those days*" should be clearly distinguished from the tribulation at the end of those days, in

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which this age and harvest will close: but this is not so clearly manifest in the accounts by Matthew and Mark as when we compare Luke's record--which seems to briefly summarize the events of the Gospel age, and, omitting the "tribulation of those days," refers only to the other tribulation with which the age will be closed. He says:

"And they [Jews] shall fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking forward to those things which are coming upon the earth." **Luke 21:24-26**

The fact is that the entire Gospel age has been a period of tribulation referred to in **Matt. 24:9-12**, and now in verse 29. (1) The early Church was persecuted by civil Rome, while later, when Papal Rome got control, all who refused to approve her abominations were persecuted by her (Jezebel) directly, or indirectly by the civil powers to which she was wedded (Ahab). And they were given into her power, and she wore out the saints of the Most High for a time, times and a half time--1260 years--until A.D. 1799. And this long persecution, in which "many were purified and made white and tried," and in which the Mother of Harlots was "drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus" (**Rev. 17:6**) ended as we have already shown, practically in 1776 and actually in 1799 when the Pope and his

authority were humiliated before the World.*

Understanding clearly, then, that it is signs that will follow the tribulation "*of those days*" that our Lord refers to, we inquire respecting the very definitely described *signs*--the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars.

*Vol. II, Chap. 9 and Vol. III, Chap. 4.

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Are these signs to be regarded as literal or as symbolic? and have they yet been fulfilled?

We answer that they have had a literal fulfilment, and are now having a symbolic fulfilment much more momentous.

On May 19, 1780 (still "in those days," the 1260 years of Papal power, but after that power had begun to wane and the brunt of the tribulation had passed) a phenomenal darkening of the sun occurred, for which scientists of that time and since have never been able to account. That this was no ordinary occurrence is sufficiently established by the following competent testimony--

The noted astronomer Herschel, says:

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

Webster's Dictionary, 1869 edition, under the head of Vocabulary of Noted Names, says:

"The dark day, May 19, 1780--so called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England. In some places, persons could not see to read common print in the open air for several hours together. Birds sang their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; fowls went to roost; cattle sought the barn-yard; and candles were lighted in the houses. The obscuration began about ten o'clock in the morning, and continued till the middle of the next night, but with differences of degree of duration in different places."

The Connecticut Legislature was in session that day and adjourned. The *Journal of the House* notes the matter as follows:

"A solemn gloom of unusual darkness before ten o'clock--a still darker cloud rolling under the sable curtain from the North and West before eleven o'clock--excluded the light so that none could see to read or write in the House, even at either window, or distinguish persons at a

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short distance, or perceive any distinction of dress in the circle of attendants; wherefore, at eleven o'clock adjourned the House till two in the afternoon." Friday, May 19, 1780.

A minister of that time, and an eye-witness, Rev. Elam Potter, preaching on the 28 inst., nine days after it, is reported to have used the following language:

"But specially I mention that *wonderful darkness on the 19th of May*, inst. Then, as in our text, the sun was darkened; such a darkness as was probably never known before since the crucifixion of our Lord. People left their work in the house and in the field; travelers stopped; schools broke up at eleven o'clock; people lighted candles at noon-day; and the fire shone as at night. Some people, I am told, were in dismay, and thought whether the day of judgment was not drawing on. A great part of the following night also was singularly dark. The moon, *though in the full, gave no light*, as in our text."

Tract No. 379, published by the American Tract Society --*The Life of Edward Lee*, says:

"In the month of May, 1780, there was a very terrific dark day when all faces seemed to gather blackness, and the people were filled with fear. There was great distress in the village where Edward Lee lived; men's hearts failed them for fear that the Judgment Day was at hand; and the neighbors all flocked around the holy man, for his lamp was trimmed and shining brighter than ever amidst the unnatural darkness. Happy and joyful in God, he pointed them to the only refuge from the wrath to come, and spent the gloomy hours in earnest prayer for the distressed multitudes."

We quote as follows from Judge R. M. Devins, in "*Our First Century*":

"Almost, if not altogether alone, as the most mysterious and as yet unexplained phenomena of its kind in nature's diversified range of events during the last century, stands the dark day of May 19, 1780; a most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens and atmosphere in New

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England, which brought intense alarm and distress to multitudes of minds, as well as dismay to the brute creation--the fowls fleeing, bewildered, to their roosts, and the cattle to their stalls. Indeed, thousands of the good people of that day became fully convinced that the end of all things terrestrial

had come, many gave up, for the time, their secular pursuits, and betook themselves to religious devotions. It was a wonderful dark day."

Judge Samuel Tenney, LL.D., wrote of this "dark day" to the Historical Society in 1785, saying:

"Several gentlemen of literary ability have endeavored to solve the phenomenon, yet I believe you will agree with me, that no satisfactory solution has yet appeared."

Noah Webster, LL.D., wrote in 1843, in the *New Haven Herald*, concerning this dark day, and said, "I stood and viewed the phenomenon. No satisfactory cause has yet been assigned."

Rev. Edward Bass, D.D., First Episcopal Bishop of Vermont, in his diary for May 19, 1780, wrote: "This day is the most remarkable in the memory of man for darkness."

The darkening of the moon at its full the night following seems to have been little less remarkable than this darkening of the sun; a witness, Judge Tenney, of Exeter, N. H., is quoted as follows:

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

This unaccountable day, except as a sign from the Lord, is reckoned to have extended over 320,000 square miles--an area about twenty-five times the size of Palestine, to which the signs of the first advent were limited. Indeed, the fact

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that these signs were chiefly confined to the New England and Middle States need not surprise us, when we remember that the first movement amongst the "Virgins"* (*Matt. 25:1-5*) was chiefly in the same locality. And that God should use the "land of liberty" for sending the message of these signs to the world, is no more wonderful than that he has been pleased to send from the same quarter many of the modern blessings and inventions and lessons, recognized by the whole world, and aptly emblemized by the gift of the great French artist, Bartholdi, to New York harbor--the statue of "Liberty Enlightening the World."

The Falling Stars

Half a century passed before the next *sign* appeared, the falling of the stars from heaven, as when a fig tree casteth her unripe fruit when shaken of a mighty wind. Our Lord's words found a fulfilment (though not their complete and only fulfilment, as we shall see later) in the wonderful meteoric showers of the early morning of Nov. 13, 1833. Those inclined to quibble by urging that "the *fixed* stars did not fall" are reminded that our Lord said nothing about fixed stars falling, and that *fixed* stars could not fall: their falling would prove that they were not *fixed*. The Scriptures do not distinguish between stars and meteors as is commonly done in our day.

Shooting stars, and even meteoric showers are not uncommon every year, and some years more than others. It is computed that 400,000 small meteors fall to our earth annually. But these are nothing in comparison to the great shower of Nov. 13, 1833, in which millions on millions fell.

Prof. Kirkwood, in his work entitled *Meteorology*, says-- "Until the close of the last century they [meteoric showers] never attracted the attention of scientific men."

*Vol. III, pages 87-90.

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Prof. D. Olmstead, LL.D., of Yale College, wrote:

"Those who were so fortunate as to witness the exhibition of shooting stars on the morning of Nov. 13, 1833, probably saw the greatest display of celestial fireworks that has ever been seen since the creation of the world, or at least within the annals covered by the pages of history...This is no longer to be regarded as a terrestrial, but a celestial phenomenon, and shooting stars are now to be no more viewed as casual productions of the upper regions of the atmosphere, but as visitants from other worlds, or from the planetary voids." *New Haven Press*

Mr. Henry Dana Ward, at the time a New York merchant, later an author and Episcopalian minister, wrote:

"No philosopher or scholar has told or recorded an event, I suppose, like that of yesterday morning. A Prophet eighteen hundred years ago foretold it exactly, if we will be at the trouble to understand falling stars to mean falling stars. ...Truly the stars of heaven fell unto the earth as in the

Apocalypse. The language of the Prophet has always been received as metaphorical; yesterday it was literally fulfilled." *Journal of Commerce*, Nov. 14, 1833

We quote the following account from *The American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. xi, page 431:

"The year 1833 is memorable for the most magnificent display on record. This was on the night of Nov. 12, and was visible over all the United States and over a part of Mexico and the West India Islands. Together with the smaller shooting stars which fell like snowflakes and produced phosphorescent lines along their course, there were intermingled large fire-balls, which darted forth at intervals, describing in a few seconds an arc of 30 or 40 degrees. These left behind luminous trains, which remained in view several minutes, and sometimes half an hour or more. One of them, seen in North Carolina, appeared of larger size and greater brilliancy than the moon. Some of the luminous bodies were of irregular form, and remained stationary for a considerable time, emitting streams of light. At Niagara the exhibition was especially brilliant, and probably no spectacle so terribly grand and sublime was

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ever before beheld by man as that of the firmament descending in fiery torrents over the dark and roaring cataract. It was observed that the lines of all the meteors, if traced back, converged in one quarter of the heavens, which was *Leonis Majoris*; and this point accompanied the stars in their apparent motion westward, instead of moving with the earth toward the East. The source whence the meteors came was thus shown to be independent of the earth's relation, and exterior to our atmosphere."

Prof. von Humboldt devotes fifteen pages of his work, *Personal Narrative*, to this phenomenon; and declares that it was visible over an area of eleven million square miles.

M. Beupland, a French savant, who witnessed it in Humboldt's company, says of it: "There was not a space in the firmament equal to the extent of three diameters of the moon that was not filled at every instant with bolides and falling stars."

The phenomenon was to a limited extent repeated in 1866, but the event of 1833 seems to have accomplished the purpose of the *sign*; and indeed, in connection with the preceding sign, it evidently had considerable to do with the first arousing of the Virgins to meet the Bridegroom, prophesied in the next chapter. *Matt. 25:1-5*

The Symbolic Fulfilments

While these literal signs served their designed purpose in drawing general attention to the Time of the End, we believe that the symbolic fulfilments are no less striking and even more interesting to those whose mental and spiritual perceptives are awakened so as to enable them to appreciate them.

The *sun* as a symbol represents the Gospel light, the truth--and thus Christ Jesus. The *moon* as a symbol represents the light of the Mosaic Law. As the moon is a reflection of the light of the sun, so the Law was the shadow or

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reflection beforehand of the Gospel. The *stars* as symbols represent the inspired teachers of the church--the apostles. The *heavens*, as already shown, represent the ecclesiastical powers of Christendom. A combination of these symbols is found in ***Revelation (12:1)*** where the "woman" symbolizing the early Church is represented as clothed with the *sun*, that is, resplendent in the full, clear light of the unclouded Gospel. The *moon* under her feet represents that the Law which supports her is nevertheless not the source of her light. The twelve stars about her head as a crown represent her divinely appointed and inspired teachers--the twelve apostles.

With this outline of the meaning of these symbols before our minds, let us examine afresh this feature of our Lord's great prophecy of the signs which are to indicate the end of this age.

Wherever we look we can recognize the fact that while God's consecrated people are being specially fed and enlightened at the present time, yet with the nominal church it is not so. Its sun is being darkened; its moon is being turned into blood; and its stars are falling. The center of the Gospel light has from the first been *the cross* of Christ, the *ransom*; and however boldly Papacy set up the competitive sacrifice of the Mass, the saints of God have always held fast to this blessed center of all God's promises and of all his people's hopes. They have held to it, even though its philosophy has been almost entirely hidden from their view.

True, there have been a few all along who, not understanding the ransom, and unable to harmonize it with

other truths, and especially with their errors, rejected it. These, however, were rare exceptions to the rule. But since 1878--the very point of trial-time indicated in the Scriptures --the parallel to the time of Christ's rejection at the first advent, when the cross of Christ became to the Jew a

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stumbling block--the stumbling here has made great progress, until today only a small minority of the professed ministers of the cross *recognize* its value or *preach* it. On the contrary, much of the teaching now aims to disclaim and disprove that we were "*bought* with a price, even the precious blood of Christ," and substitutes for this the theory of Evolution, claiming that Christ's value to the sinner consists in his words and example *merely*.

Thus the sunlight of the Gospel is daily becoming more and more obscure; and although this denial of the value of the precious blood as our redemption price has not so generally extended from the pulpit to the pew, yet, false doctrines long held sacred, together with reverence for leaders and learning, have made the way so easy that a large majority of all who get sufficiently awake to consider the subject fall an easy prey to this doctrine of Evolution, which denies the Scriptural doctrine of a primal fall and of a ransom from it. The Scriptures variously forewarn us of this great falling away, as well as of this darkening of the faith of the Church at *this* time; so that the Son of Man when he cometh will find *the faith* very scarce on the earth. (**Luke 18:8**) A psalm describing this period declares: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee [the faithful saints, members of the body of Christ, whose elect members will now shortly be completed]." **Psalm 91:7**

As the sunlight of the *ransom* becomes obscured, so the moonlight of the Mosaic Law, which in its sacrifices foreshadowed the ransom, must of necessity become obscured also. It is no longer uncommon for public teachers to refer to the *bloody* sacrifices of Israel, required by their Law, as barbaric. Once, when they saw by the true light of the Word of God, they appreciated the Apostle's statement that Israel's sacrifices were foreshadowings of "better sacrifices"

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for sin; but now, refusing the antitype, the ransom, and denying original sin, and all need therefore of sacrifices for it--the typical sacrifices are repudiated also and esteemed barbaric. Thus the darkening of the Gospel sunlight results in the darkening of the moonlight. "The moon shall be turned into *blood*." And **Joel (2:10)** adds that "the stars shall withdraw their shining," which signifies that when the Gospel light is obscured, and the Law comes to be regarded merely as a meaningless and barbaric ceremony of blood, then the teachings of the God-ordained twelve stars of the Church (the apostles) will also fade from view--cease to be recognized guides or lights.

As we have seen, God has recognized or appointed twelve apostolic stars for the Church. From these and the moon and the sun all the enlightenment of the Church was to proceed. And from these the true light, which has blessed the true Church, has proceeded. But Papacy, assuming ecclesiastical lordship of earth, has placed or "ordained" various stars, lights, "authorities," "theologians," in her firmament; and the various Protestant denominations have done likewise, until the whole number is innumerable. But God, while providing helps, evangelists and teachers to his true Church has not ordained them with the authority of *lights* or *stars*. On the contrary, all of his faithful followers are instructed to accept as light only those rays of truth seen to proceed from the sun and moon and twelve stars *ordained for that purpose*.

All the others of God's people are during this age to be burning and shining lamps, and are not to put their lamps under a bushel, but to so shine as to glorify their Father in heaven. The word *star* (Greek *aster*) is not used respecting any of the faithful (outside the apostles) in referring to them in this present life; but it is used with reference to those who depart from the truth, and become "heady,"

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false teachers, "vainly puffed up," aspiring to be considered *authorities* in the same sense as the apostles, and who are styled "wandering stars," "false apostles." **2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2; Jude 13**

On the contrary, the Scriptures everywhere hold out the promise that the faithful, humble lamp-light-shiners of this present time shall by and by with Christ be the glorious and honored seed of Abraham--"as the stars of heaven." But

not in the present "heavens" which shall shortly pass away with great commotion, will these shine--no, but in the "new heavens"--the new ecclesiastical kingdom of the Millennial age. Of the same class, and of that same resurrection time, the Prophet *Daniel (12:3)* says, "They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as *the stars* for ever and ever." The Apostle Paul also speaks of the Church's future glory in the first resurrection, saying that their glories will differ "as *star* differeth from *star* in glory."

Now if God ordained only twelve stars as lights for his Church, as represented in *Revelation (12:1)*, is it not a great mistake for popes and bishops to regard themselves as successors of the apostles--stars also? And is it not a fact that certain of the so-called "higher critics" regard themselves and are regarded by others as the equals or indeed the superiors of the apostles, as light-shiners, stars? And do not they and others show this, by preaching *their own ideas*, shining out their own light on various subjects, without considering it necessary to consult or to give as *proof* the words of the inspired apostles? And if they quote or refer at all to the light of the true stars, the twelve apostles' teachings, is it not rather to have them *confirm* their views or light, rather than to show that the teaching is light from the apostolic stars? And indeed the light of these false stars, "wandering stars,"

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is usually so opposed to that of the inspired twelve, that they can scarcely so much as find a suitable text from their writings.

In our Lord's prophecy these true star-lights are reckoned in as part of the Gospel Sunlight, darkened, withdrawn from shining; while the false stars, the worldly-wise, man-ordained lights of the present heavens are represented as making a great display in coming down to earthly conditions--abandoning their once somewhat spiritual eminence, and in their teachings coming down to the level of earthly moralists and philosophers--to the Christian-citizenship-politics level.

The *shaking* of the symbolic ecclesiastical heavens mentioned in the same connection has somewhat to do with these lights of Christendom coming to a lower plane of public teaching. This *shaking* would signify just what we see on every hand--a shaking up of the creeds and dogmas of Christendom, which, because of their admixture of errors, produce confusion whenever referred to--as, for instance

the doctrine of elect and non-elect infants; the doctrine of the eternal torment of all who are not saints, overcomers, etc.

As a consequence, many of the worldly-wise men who are starring before the public are already making every effort to distract attention from all such subjects. What other subjects can they find than either the true or the false doctrine of election; and the true or the false idea of God's provision for the future life of mankind? Not knowing of the true, divine plan of the ages, and not wishing to awaken controversy along the lines of hell and infant damnation, what can these star preachers preach, that will attract to them the attention of the world?

They can abandon spiritual themes entirely, and descend

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to the plane of the natural man, to moral and political reform questions. They can go "slumming," and preach the anti-slum gospel. They can join in Christian-citizenship Crusades, etc. And these things will more and more engage these pulpit stars; while others will create sensations by outdoing the most celebrated Infidels in statements of what they do not believe; in making sport of the Bible record of an Adamic fall into sin, and the idea of being saved out of something which is a myth, according to their Evolutionary theory.

Who cannot see these signs fulfilling on every hand today! But the sun and moon and twelve stars are only partly obscured as yet; nevertheless many of the false stars have fallen from every pretense of Gospel shining to the level of the comprehension of the masses to whom they shine.

Coincidentally, *Luke (21:25,26)* adds other signs of this time: "Upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves [the restless and lawless elements] roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth [society]: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

The roaring sea and waves symbolize the restless masses of humanity, curbed, but not fully restrained, by the laws and regulations of society. Every one has heard some of this "roaring" for the past twenty years, with occasional stormy outbreaks dashing like tidal waves against the earth [social order] and seeking to swallow it up. Restrained for a time, these waves are gathering weight and force; and, as prophetically shown, it is only a question of a few years until all

the mountains [kingdoms] are "removed and carried into the midst of the sea," in anarchy. (*Psalms 46:1,2*) Every newspaper, not under the control of wealth, voices the roar of the restless "sea" class; and the others, though unwillingly,

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must give the echo of the roaring as matters of news. This it is, that in a period of comparative peace, is causing "distress of nations with perplexity."

And it is as men begin to realize that the sea-roar and unrest is due largely to the wane of superstition and of ecclesiastical influence, and as they more and more see the powers of heaven (sectarian creeds and systems) shaken, that their hearts are failing them for fear--in apprehension of the things coming upon the earth (society); but the strenuous efforts now being made to re-establish and unify sectarian power and influence, will be in great measure successful only for a short time; for it will surely disintegrate completely.

"And then [at that same time] shall appear the sign [evidence, proof] of the Son of Man," the proof or evidence of the second advent of the Son of Man.

We should not lose sight of the fact that this entire prophecy is given in answer to certain questions, one of which was, "*What shall be the sign of thy presence*" at the second advent? Having in mind the fact that few recognized the Messiah at his first advent, and that they themselves had doubts and fears on the subject for a considerable time, they wished to know how they would be sure to recognize him. At the first advent our Lord showed himself, and was attested by *signs*--by his wonderful words and works, and by John the baptizer. *What sign* should they expect to indicate his second *presence*? was their pointed question.

Our Lord's answer assured them that his people would not be left without a suitable and sufficient *sign*; but of its character he said nothing. "Then shall appear *the* sign of the Son of Man." It will be sufficient for the faithful, watchful people of God, but is *not intended for others*. It was this class that saw and understood the signs or proofs of his first advent, while the masses of nominal Israel *could not discern the*

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SIGNS *of their times*, and God did not wish that others should discern them; hence many of the wonderful words of life were spoken in parables and dark sayings, that seeing they might not *see*, and hearing they might not understand, being unworthy of the light then due to the faithful only. And so it will be in respect to the *sign* or *evidence* of the Lord's second presence. It will not be manifested to all mankind: it can be recognized only by Israelites indeed, and they must be honest--without guile.

The word *sign* (verse 30) is in the Greek *seemion* and has the significance of *proof* or *evidence* as illustrated in the following cases:

"And many other *signs* truly did Jesus." **John 20:30**

"The Lord...granted *signs* and wonders to be done by their [Paul's and Barnabas'] hands." **Acts 14:3**

"Tongues are for a *sign*...to them that believe not."

1 Cor. 14:22

"Truly the *signs* of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in *signs*," etc. **2 Cor. 12:12**

Hence, "Ye shall see the *sign* of the Son of Man," does not signify that the Lord's disciples then living will see *him*, but that they will have an indication or evidence of his *presence* at that time. The *signs* of our Lord's second presence will be found in harmony with, and corroborated by, the testimony of the prophets,* as was the case at the first advent.

Luke 24:44-46

"*In Heaven*:" The sign or proof of his *parousia* will be given *in heaven*. Not in the heaven of the Father's presence and before the holy angels, but in the symbolic heaven, the ecclesiastical heaven, the same heaven which the preceding verse tells us shall be so terribly shaken as to shake out its stars. It is *in this heaven*--the professedly spiritual class--that the sign

*Vol. II, Chaps. 5,6,7.

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or *evidence of our Lord's presence* will first be apparent. Some will "*see*" the fulfilment of the prophetic declarations respecting this day of the second presence, in the marvelous unfolding of the divine plan of the ages, and will recognize it as one of the *signs of his presence*. (**Luke 12:37**) The *judgment* of Babylon, Christendom, social and ecclesiastical, is another sign that the Judge has come, and is reckoning first of

all with those to whom as stewards he committed his goods. (**Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15**) "Judgment must begin with the house of God"; and it means confusion and consternation among the Doctors and Chief Priests of the present time, as they attempt to reconcile their doctrines, practices and faiths, as it did to the Pharisees and Priests and Doctors of the Law at our Lord's first presence--even though the *presence was denied* then, as now.

But at the first presence the humble Israelites indeed, whom God accounted worthy, were not confused, but enlightened, so that our Lord could say to them, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear: for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (**Matt. 13:16,17**) So now in the second *presence* of the Son of Man, the opening up of the divine Word, the discernment of the divine plan showing as well the divine times and seasons, and the confusion upon "Babylon" are satisfactory proofs of the presence of the King.

"Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven."

Matt. 24:30

The tribes of earth will not see the *sign* or *proof* of the Lord's *presence* given only among the "heavens," the at least nominally spiritual--the churches--and appreciated only

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by the guileless of these. Nor will they ever see the Lord himself by natural sight, for he is no longer *flesh* and to be seen of the fleshly.* Our Lord's words should be remembered --"Yet a little while and the world *seeth me no more*."

(**John 14:19**) And the Apostle's words to the Church are also to be kept in memory--that we all must be "changed," and made spirit beings like our Lord, before we can "*see him as he is*." (**1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 John 3:2**) The tribes of earth, on the contrary, will see the *clouds of trouble* and confusion incident to the shaking of the "heavens," and realize it to be a storm which will shake the "earth" also (See **Heb. 12:26,27**.) and at that time also there shall be a general mourning of all, incident to that great time of trouble; and eventually all mankind at the close of the storm shall *discern*, recognize the new King with the eyes of their understanding and shall mourn for sin, and that they ever in blindness rejected him--the Jew first. See **Zech. 12:10-12**.

"And he shall send his angels with a great trumpet and he shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (*Sinaitic MS* omits "sound.")

Matt. 24:31

This work will be in progress in the interim, the "harvest." The angels (messengers of the new King of earth) will do a separating work, not between the church and the world, but a separating work in the nominal church--among nominal professors, the present "heavens." This work is represented under various symbolic descriptions--it is the gathering of the wheat from the tares into the barn (**Matt. 13:30**); it is the gathering of the good fish into baskets and the casting of the unsuitable fish caught in the gospel net back into the sea (**Matt. 13:47-49**); it is the gathering of his jewels (**Mal. 3:17**); it is the calling of "my

*Vol. II, Chap. 5.

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people" out of Babylon (**Rev. 18:4**); it is the midnight cry to the virgins, which separates the wise from the foolish (**Matt. 25:6**); and in this prophecy it is the gathering of the "elect" from all the non-elect of Christendom, from the four winds--from every quarter.

We are not to expect spirit-angels to appear with wings and to fly through the air blowing a great trumpet, and here and there catching away some of the saints--no more than we are to expect to become literal fish and to be put into literal baskets, or literal grains of wheat to be put into a literal barn. The angels or messengers used by our Lord in this harvest gathering will, we believe, be such messengers as he has used in his service throughout this age--earthly servants, begotten of his holy Spirit--"new creatures in Christ Jesus."

The "great trumpet" we understand to be the antitypical "trumpet of Jubilee," the "seventh trumpet," as symbolic as the preceding six (**Rev. 11:15-18**), none of which ever made any literal sound. It has been symbolically sounding since October 1874, and will continue to the end of the Millennium. With the beginning of this trumpet began the "harvest" and the reaping and separating, which must continue until the "elect," the "wheat," are all gathered out of the present heavens (ecclesiastical systems)--unto the Lord. The "angels" (messengers) are those who carry the *message* of the Lord's Word which produces the separation and

gathers his elect to himself.

It is the privilege of the faithful people of God who are now translated out of darkness into the marvelous light--who are permitted to *see* and *hear* those things which others do not see and hear, to be co-workers with their Lord as his angels--messengers or servants--in this as well as in all the other features of the work, throughout the age. By his grace such have plowed and sowed and harrowed and watered,

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and *now* the same class may also reap with the Chief Reaper.

Proximity of the Kingdom of God

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves ye know that summer* is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (the Kingdom of God--**Luke 17:21**) is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." "Heaven and earth [the present ecclesiastical and social order] shall pass away: but my word shall not pass away." **Matt. 24:32-35**

Unbelievers have seized upon this passage claiming that it manifestly has not been fulfilled, and hence proves our Lord to have been a false prophet. They apply the prophecy wholly to the troubles connected with the fall of Israel's national polity in A.D. 70, and contemptuously remark that *that generation* and many more passed away without seeing the fulfilment of "all these things." Our answer to this, of course, is that our Lord's prophecy is not understood --that it referred only in part to the trouble upon Israel which culminated in A.D. 70.

But to meet the objection, certain Christian writers have been led to claim that the words "this generation" really meant, *this race*, the Jews, shall not pass away until all these predictions have been fulfilled.

But we must dissent from this interpretation for several reasons:

(1) Although the words "generation" and "race" may be said to come from a common root or starting point, yet they are not the same; and in Scriptural usage the two words are quite distinct.

*The Hebrews divided their year into two seasons, Summer and Winter.

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Notice that in the New Testament when the word *generation* is used in the sense of race or posterity, it is always from the Greek *gennema* (as in ***Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; Luke 3:7***) or from *genos* (as in ***1 Pet. 2:9***). But in the three different records of this prophecy our Lord is credited with using a wholly different Greek word (*genea*) which does not mean race, but has the same significance as our English word generation. Other uses of this Greek word (*genea*) prove that it is not used with the significance of race, but in reference to people living contemporaneously. We cite in proof--***Matt. 1:17; 11:16; 12:41; 23:36; Luke 11:50,51; 16:8; Acts 13:36; Col. 1:26; Heb. 3:10.***

(2) Our Lord could not have meant the Jewish race, and it would have been improper to have used a Greek word signifying *race*, because the Jewish race was not the subject of the apostles' inquiry nor of our Lord's prophecy in reply. Israel is barely referred to in the prophecy, and to have said, This *race* will not pass away until all be fulfilled, would have left the matter open to the question as to which or what race might be meant, for no particular race is indicated. It would, therefore, if the word meant *race*, be as proper to say that it meant the *human race* as to say that it referred to the *Jewish race*.

But understanding *genea* here, as elsewhere, to mean *generation*, and recognizing that our Lord's words were a prophecy covering the entire Gospel age, we have no difficulty in understanding the statement to mean--"This generation [which will witness the signs inquired for by the apostles and just enumerated by our Lord--namely, the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars]--*this generation* shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled." In other words, the signs mentioned will occur within a generation-epoch in the close of the age.

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The sprouting of the fig tree may have been but a casual remark, but we incline to think that it was not. The peculiar circumstance narrated of our Lord's curse upon a fig tree which bore no fruit, and which withered away directly (***Matt. 21:19,20***) inclines us to believe that the fig tree in this prophecy may be understood to signify the Jewish nation. If so, it is being signally fulfilled; for not only are thousands of Israelites returning to Palestine, but the Zionist movement, as all know, has now assumed such proportions as to justify Conventions of representatives from all parts of

the world to meet year by year to put in practical shape the proposal for the reorganization of a Jewish state in Palestine. These buds will thrive, but will bear no perfect fruit before October 1914--the full end of "Gentile Times."

A "generation" might be reckoned as equivalent to a century (practically the present limit) or one hundred and twenty years, Moses' lifetime and the Scripture limit. (*Gen. 6:3*) Reckoning a hundred years from 1780, the date of the first sign, the limit would reach to 1880; and, to our understanding, every item predicted had begun to be fulfilled at that date; the "harvest" or gathering time beginning October 1874; the organization of the Kingdom and the taking by our Lord of his great power as the King in April 1878, and the time of trouble or "day of wrath" which began October 1874, and will cease about 1915; and the sprouting of the fig tree. Those who choose might without inconsistency say that the century or generation might as properly reckon from the last sign, the falling of the stars, as from the first, the darkening of the sun and moon: and a century beginning

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1833 would be still far from run out. Many are living who witnessed the star-falling sign. Those who are walking with us in the light of present truth are not looking for things to *come* which are already here, but are waiting for the consummation of matters already in progress. Or, since the Master said, "When ye shall see *all* these things," and since "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven," and the budding fig tree, and the gathering of "the elect" are counted among the signs, it would not be inconsistent to reckon the "generation" from 1878 to 1914--36 1/2 years--about the *average* of human life today.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but my Father only." (*Matt. 24:36, Sinaitic MS. Compare Mark 13:32,33.*) "Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is."

To many these words seem to imply much more than they express: they think of them as though they put a lock upon and made useless all the prophecies of the Bible--as though our Lord had said, "No man shall *ever* know," whereas he merely said, "No man [*now*] knoweth," referring only to the persons who heard him--to whom the exact times and seasons were not due to be revealed. Who can doubt that the "angels of heaven" and "the Son" *now know*, fully and clearly, matters which have progressed so nearly to fulfilment? And if they are not *now* hindered from knowing

by the statement of this verse, neither *now* are God's saints hindered or restrained by this verse from seeking an understanding of all truth "written aforetime for our learning." Indeed, it was in great measure because it was not the Father's will that his people *then*, nor down to the time the "seals" were broken* should know the date, that our Lord delineated the course of events, and assured them that if they would watch and pray and thus continue faithful,

*Vol. II, Chaps. 2 and 3.

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they, at the proper time, would not be left in darkness, but would see and know.

God, through his Prophet Daniel, pointed out that at *this* time "the wise shall understand" the vision and prophecy, and merely that "none of the wicked shall understand." (*Dan. 12:9,10*) To this the Apostle Paul adds his testimony, "Ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should come upon you as a thief," although it shall come thus upon all the world. "Watch ye, therefore [that in *due time* YE MAY KNOW], and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass."

As in the Days of Noah, "They Knew Not"

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the presence [Greek *parousia*] of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and KNEW NOT,...*so shall also the presence of the Son of Man be.*" *Matt. 24:37-39*

The real point of this illustration is overlooked by many who presuppose, without any authority in the Master's words, that the similarity here being pointed out is the *wickedness* of Noah's day and that of the day of Christ's presence. But while such a comparison might have been justifiable and proper, the fact remains that such comparison was not made, but avoided. The comparison made is *similarity of ignorance*. Only Noah and his family *knew*; the people KNEW NOT, but proceeded as usual--marrying, planting, building, eating and drinking. Similarly, *during the time of Christ's*

presence in the end of this age, and while the great time of trouble is impending, the only ones who will know of his *presence* or have a clear apprehension of what is coming, or why, or the outcome, will be the Lord's people. Others will "*know not.*"

In **Luke (17:26-29)** the same lesson is taught; and both

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Noah's and Lot's neighbors are shown to have been *ignorant* of their impending troubles *in the days* of Noah, and *in the days* of Lot, as people here will be ignorant of the coming trouble *in the days of the Son of Man*--after he has come and is present. We see this clearly fulfilled about us today. The world is fearful and perplexed; but it knows not of the *presence* of the Son of Man, and the "harvest" reckoning now in progress. Even though they may approximately surmise the trouble coming, they cannot guess the blessing that is beyond it.

"Even thus shall it be when the Son of Man [already *present*] is revealed [made manifest--first to his watching 'virgins,' later in the trouble to all men]. In that day, he which shall be on the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife! Whosoever shall seek to save his life [by compromises of conscience and staying in Babylon] shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life [sacrifice the interests of the present life] shall preserve it"--everlastingly. **Luke 17:30-33**

Thus does Luke's Gospel apply these words (already considered, foregoing) to the close of the Gospel age--"the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

"Remember Lot's wife!" is our Lord's pointed warning. How slight would be the appropriateness of this injunction, if applied to those who fled from Judea in A.D. 70; but how intensely forceful it is as a caution to God's people here, in the close of the Gospel age. When we learn that Babylon is doomed, and hear the Lord's message, "Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues," it is indeed like the voice of the messengers who hastened Lot and his family out of Sodom, saying, "Stay not in all the plain; escape for thy life; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed; look not behind thee." **Gen. 19:17**

The illustration is heightened when we remember that

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Christendom is "that great city [Babylon] which spiritually is called Sodom." *Rev. 11:8*

Lot's wife, after starting to flee as directed, "looked back"; coveting the things behind: and so with some now fleeing from Babylon to the mountain (Kingdom) of the Lord; they are more in sympathy with the things behind than with the things before. Only those will run the race to the finish who set their affections on the things above, and not on the things beneath. The perseverance of the saints springs from a full consecration of heart; all others will fail so to run as to obtain the great prize.

One Taken and Another Left

"I tell you that in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left."

Luke 17:34--omitted by Matthew.

The Lord, through the Prophet, informs us that though the Millennial morning draws near, a night also approaches. (*Isa. 21:12*) It will be a night of trouble in the forepart of which the saints will be gathered out of Babylon. The "bed" here, in harmony with Isaiah's use of that word (*Isa. 28:20*), may be interpreted to symbolize human creeds which are long enough for "babes" in Christ, but too short for a developed "man" to stretch himself in it. This is true of the various "doctrines of men," substituted for but very different from the doctrines of God's Word whose lengths and breadths surpass human knowledge. For instance, the doctrine of Election, as taught by our Calvinist friends is a quite sufficient "bed" to rest many who are only "babes" in Christ, whose senses have never been much exercised; but as in the light of present-day knowledge the babes get awake and grow in grace and knowledge, they will all surely find the old creed-bed too short for comfort; and as each attempts to wrap himself in the promises of God narrowed

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by an erroneous theology, he cannot satisfactorily cover himself; doubts creep in to chill him with fear that after all he is not certain that he and all his friends are of the "elect"; and by and by such developed Christians find it a relief to get out of such a predicament; and to such God generally sends the light of present truth to guide them to a

"large place" of true rest supplied with abundant coverings for all who seek to know and to do the Father's will. Others, however, the vast majority, remain quite satisfied and comfortable in their various little cribs, because they are "babes" and not "men" in Christian knowledge and experience. "One shall be taken and the other left."

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." ***Matt. 24:40***

"The field is the world," our Lord explained; and in this discourse it represents a condition outside the nominal "house"--outside of Babylon. Thus we are taught that not all "come-outers" will be "gathered," but that the "jewels" will be sought wherever they may be--"the Lord knoweth them that are his," and in this harvest gathering he is making up his jewels--gathering his "elect," to be joint-heirs in his Kingdom.

"Two shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left." ***Matt. 24:41; Luke 17:35***

A mill is a place where food is prepared: the ministers and theological schools do the grinding of the spiritual food for "Babylon," and turn out very poor grist--not "clean provender." The complaint is a growing one that the food supplied is largely husks and chaff, which will not sustain spiritual life and strength: and each grinder is obliged to prepare what is given him by his own denomination, and he cannot hold his position and yet provide the "meat in due season," "clean provender," for the household of faith. Hence "present truth" gathers some of the grinders and

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leaves others--one is taken and another left. Those who are loyal to God and to his flock will be taken; all others will be left. While the world and the nominal church declare this to be a time of union and "confederacy," God declares it to be a time of separating. ***Isa. 8:12***

Whither Gathered--the Attraction

"And they [the disciples] answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? [Where will these be TAKEN?] And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body [the carcass, the food] is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." ***Matt. 24:28; Luke 17:37***

The lesson is that *in that day*, when the Lord is gathering

his "elect" from the four winds of heaven--from every quarter of the Church--he will attract them as eagles are attracted, by food, for which they have a keenness of vision and appetite; that in due time the Lord would provide the proper food, and his true people would recognize it and be gathered to it--the ready and worthy taken and the others left.

The food of "present truth" now provided by our Lord, and the gathering of his saints by and to it, fits the description of this prophecy exactly. The present call is not out of one "mill" into another "mill"; nor out of one "bed" into another of about the same size. It is not the gathering by one man or many men, to him or to them, into a new denomination; but a gathering together unto Christ himself, the true and only Master and Teacher. Where and when before was there ever such a public recognition of all who trust in the precious blood of Christ and who are consecrated to him, as the one household of faith--all brethren--and the one and only Lawgiver Christ, regardless of human creeds and dogmas upon other subjects? Never and nowhere since the days of the apostles, so far as we may judge.

Moreover, it is worthy of note that great human ability, oratory, etc., have been notably connected with other movements, but not with this present gathering to the Lord. Here the *truth*, the spiritual food which the Lord is supplying,

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is the whole attraction: human flourish and oratory find little room for exercise here; they are lacking but are not missed. The gathered and gathering ones come together because they "hunger and thirst after righteousness:" and they are finding the satisfying portion which the Lord himself has provided; and each for himself is eating thereof.

Watch, if Ye Would Know

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But understand this [the reason why the time is so secreted under symbols and parables], that if the householder had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." *Matt. 24:42,43*

The "master of the house" or "householder" of the present

dispensation is not *our* Lord, but *our* Adversary, the devil--"the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air," "the prince of this world," who now ruleth in the children of disobedience, blinding the minds of all that believe not--whose eyes of understanding have not been anointed with the Lord's eye-salve. (**2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 3:18**) This adversary is a wily one, and very cunning; and whatever knowledge he has of the divine times and seasons and arrangements he is prompt to use in opposing the divine plan, as our Lord declares in the foregoing statement.

The Heavenly Father's course toward Satan has been to let him take his own way, except where it would conflict with the divine plan, and so to overrule his evil devices as to use them for the furtherance of the divine plan. Hence Satan, although he has long known the Bible, has understood but little of it, for the same reason that man has not understood it; because written in parables, symbols and figures of speech. And now that these are *due* to be understood, the understanding of them is confined to such as have the guidance of the holy Spirit, which, as our Lord promised, "shall guide *you* into all truth," but which the world cannot receive. Satan does not possess the holy Spirit and is not guided by it, and consequently much of the divine Word is

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foolishness unto him. But he has learned no doubt as the world to some extent has learned, that--"The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." (**Psa. 25:14**) We may presume therefore that his representatives, the fallen angels, are frequently present at the little Conferences and Bible studies, etc., of God's truly consecrated people, to learn something of the divine plan.

In what way Satan would have managed his affairs differently if he had known sooner more about the divine plan, we can only surmise; but we have our Lord's positive testimony that such knowledge on Satan's part would have made necessary a different ending of the Gospel age, and a different opening of the Millennial age, than God had purposed and declared. But instead of knowing and setting his house in order, he was taken unawares by the Lord's *parousia* in 1874, and the "harvest" work then begun: so that with all his wiles and deceptions, all his simulations of the true light, etc., his "house," present institutions, will suffer complete collapse. As he realizes this, he puts forth the most strenuous efforts to deceive--even resorting through his deluded servants to miracles of physical healing, although he

is the prince of disease, sickness and death. (*Heb. 2:14*) But a house thus divided against itself is sure to fall: and great will be the fall of Babylon: it will fall as a great millstone cast into the sea. *Rev. 18:21*

"Therefore be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." *Matt. 24:44*

Here "*ye also*," believers, the Lord's faithful, are mentioned in contrast with Satan and his household. The time of the Lord's presence could not be known beforehand, even by the saints. Nor was the fact of the Lord's presence recognized until nearly a year after October 1874, when his knock, through the word of the prophets and apostles, was recognized. Since that time there are abundant outward signs, evidences, of the presence of the Son of Man; and his devoted ones as they are gathered from the four winds of heaven, are taken into his banqueting house and caused to sit down to meat such as the world knoweth not of, and are served, first of all by the Master himself, and incidentally by each other. See *Luke 12:37*.

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Dispensing of Food to the Household

--*Matt. 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46*--

"Who then is the faithful and prudent servant, whom his Master has placed over his household to give them food in due season? Happy that servant whom his Master, on coming, shall find thus employed! Indeed I say to you that he will appoint him over all his stores of provisions." *Matt. 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46*

The intimation here seems to be, that at the particular time indicated by the prophecy--namely, during the Lord's *presence*, and at the time of the gathering of the elect--our Lord, the great Servant of his people, will make choice of *one channel* for dispensing the meat in due season, though other channels or "fellow-servants" will be used in bringing the food to the "household." But the servant is merely a steward, and liable to be removed at any moment, should he fail to fully and duly acknowledge in every particular, the Master--the great Servant of God and his people--"the Messenger of the Covenant"--Christ.

Faithfulness on the part of said steward (both to the "Master" and to "his fellow-servants" and "the household")

will be rewarded by his continuance as steward; so long as he serves faithfully, he may continue, and may serve the household of faith with things new and old--meat in due season--to the end; bringing forth all the precious things of divine provision. But if unfaithful he will be deposed entirely and put into outer darkness, while presumably another would take the place, subject to the same conditions.

To our understanding this would not imply that "that servant" or steward, used as a channel for the circulation of the "meat in due season," would be the *originator* of that meat, nor *inspired*, nor *infallible*. Quite to the contrary, we may be sure that whoever the Lord will so use, as a truth-distributing agent, will be very humble and unassuming, as well as very zealous for the Master's glory; so that he would not think of claiming authorship or ownership of the truth, but would merely dispense it zealously, as his Master's gift, to his Master's "servants" and "household."

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Any other spirit and course would surely work a change of steward. This is detailed by our Lord as follows:

"But if that servant shall [become] wicked, and [losing faith] say in his heart, My Master delays his coming; and shall smite his fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the intemperate [of their false doctrines], the Master of that servant will be present in a day that he looketh not for, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him off [from being his servant] and will appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matt. 24:48-51

* * *

Our Lord was the greatest of all Prophets, and his prophecy likewise the most striking. Moses' and Jeremiah's and other prophecies deal chiefly with the rejection and regathering of fleshly Israel. Isaiah's prophecies besides dealing with fleshly Israel show Jesus Christ the sufferer for our sins as also a light to the Gentiles, and ultimately the opening of all the blind eyes of humanity to "that true light." Daniel foretells the coming and cutting off of Messiah, the Pentecostal anointing of the most holy, the history of Gentile powers to their end, and the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom under the whole heaven. He also shows the persecuting power of the Papal little horn, its wearing out of

the saints during the age, and the days of waiting for the Kingdom, etc. But no other prophet than our Lord has given us the needed details of this "harvest" time, connecting these with the prominent events noted by the other prophets.

Our Lord's prophecy, like those of the others, is veiled in symbolic and parabolic language, and for the same purpose; that "none of the wicked should understand," but the meek, honest and faithful of God's people only--in God's due time and way.

"Unto *you* it is given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God: but to others in parables ["dark sayings"]; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." ***Luke 8:10***