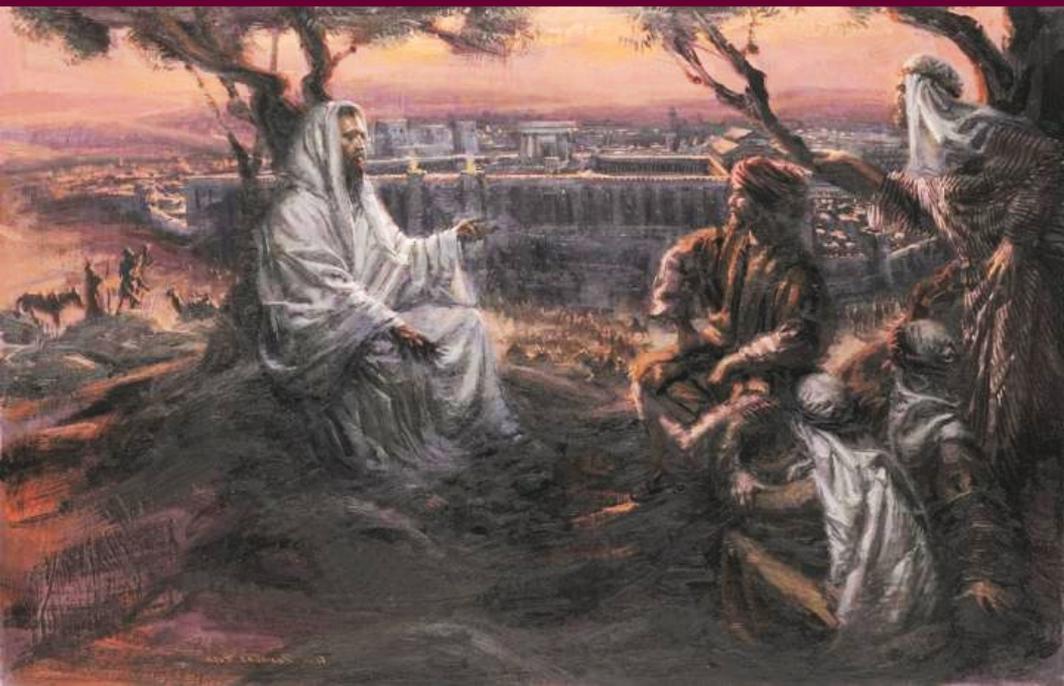


An Exposition of
Matthew 24
and
Lessons from Matthew 24

A. T. Jones



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Contents

An Exposition of Matthew 24

Introduction.....	1
1. Exposition of Matthew 24.....	5
<i>The End of the World.....</i>	8
<i>The Understanding of the Disciples.....</i>	9
<i>The Order of Events.....</i>	11
2. National Calamities.....	13
<i>Wars, Famines, not Definite Signs.....</i>	14
<i>Definite Signs in Sun, Moon, and Stars.....</i>	15
<i>History of Wars, Famines, Pestilences.....</i>	16
<i>Persecutions.....</i>	17
3. False Prophets.....	18
4. Iniquity Abounds.....	21
5. The Preaching of the Gospel.....	23
6. The Destruction of Jerusalem.....	27
7. The Great Tribulation.....	29
<i>Not Fulfilled in the Destruction of Jerusalem.....</i>	29
<i>The Gathering of the Saints.....</i>	29
<i>The Rise of the Man of Sin.....</i>	31
<i>Tribulation of the Church.....</i>	32
8. The Days of Tribulation Shortened.....	35
9. Lo, Here, and Lo, There.....	36
<i>A Future Coming.....</i>	36
<i>A Literal Coming.....</i>	37
<i>A Security from Deceptions.....</i>	38
<i>Doctrines That Decieve.....</i>	39
<i>Not Fulfilled by the Roman Army.....</i>	40
10. The Advent Will Be Literal.....	42
<i>A Personal Coming.....</i>	42
<i>The Resurrection of the Dead.....</i>	42
<i>Scripture Demands It.....</i>	43
<i>Glorification of the Saints.....</i>	44
<i>Hope for the Future.....</i>	45

11. Signs of the Lord's Coming.....	46
<i>Not Symbolic</i>	46
<i>Not Fulfilled in Jerusalem</i>	47
<i>Signs in the Heavens</i>	48
<i>Harmony of the Literal View</i>	48
12. Fulfillment of the Signs.....	51
<i>The Sun Darkened</i>	51
<i>The Moon Obscured</i>	52
<i>Falling of the Stars</i>	53
13. All These Things.....	57
14. Parable of the Fig-Tree.....	63
15. This Generation Shall Not Pass.....	66
16. Of That Day and Hour Knows No Man.....	68
17. This Generation.....	72
<i>The Harmony in Revelation</i>	75
<i>The Witness of the Lord's Supper</i>	77
<i>The Working of False Miracles</i>	78
18. Noah's Time and Ours.....	81
19. Object of Matthew 24.....	84
<i>Knowing the Time</i>	84
<i>Prophetic Evidences</i>	86
<i>The Close of Probation</i>	88
20. Our Duty to Watch.....	92
21. The Faithful and Wise Servant.....	95
<i>Marks of the Wise Servant</i>	95
<i>He is Faithful</i>	96
<i>He is Wise</i>	96
22. The Evil Servant.....	98
<i>Relationship to the Message</i>	98
<i>Ease and Slumber</i>	99
<i>Summary</i>	101
23. A Practical Doctrine.....	102
24. The Faithful Rewarded at His Coming.....	104

Lessons from Matthew 24

1. The End of the World.....	107
2. Let No Man Deceive You.....	113
<i>Heavens Rolled Back</i>	118
<i>The Voice</i>	119
<i>Resurrection and Translation</i>	119
3. As to the Time of His Coming.....	121
4. The Signs of the Lord's Coming.....	129
<i>After the Tribulation</i>	129
<i>The Dark Day, 1780</i>	133
<i>The Falling of the Stars, 1833</i>	136
<i>Distress of Nations</i>	139
5. Get Ready, Get Ready, Get Ready!.....	143
6. The Destruction of Jerusalem: Its Meaning Today.....	149
<i>The Center of Controversy</i>	152
<i>Confederation Against Christ</i>	156
<i>Increasing Antagonism</i>	158
<i>An Instrument of Destruction</i>	161
<i>A Lesson to the United States</i>	165

Appendix

This Generation Shall Not Pass.....	169
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An Exposition of
Matthew 24
on the
Second Coming of Christ

Disciples: *“What shall be the sign of your coming,
and of the end of the world?”*

Jesus: *“When you shall see all these things,
know that it is near, even at the doors.”*

Introduction

NO TRUTH of Inspiration is more clearly stated than that God reveals His designs to His prophets, so that men and nations may be warned of coming events before their accomplishment.

Amos 3

⁷ Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the Prophets.

Before visiting the world with judgments, God has uniformly sent forth warnings sufficient to enable the believing to escape His wrath, and to condemn those who have not heeded the warning. This was the case before the flood.

Hebrews 11

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world.

In the days of Lot, when the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had become so sunken in idolatry and crime that the destruction of these cities was determined, the Lord revealed to Abraham, His righteous servant, what He was about to do.¹ Lot also was warned, that he might escape. And through Lot the ungodly inhabitants of Sodom were warned, but they made light of the warning.

Genesis 19

¹⁴ And Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

Thus also when the Lord determined to overthrow Nineveh, He sent Jonah with a message of warning. The people in this great city took an opposite course to that of the men of Sodom. They humbled themselves before God, and repented of their wicked-

¹ *Genesis 18:17-33.*

ness; therefore the Lord spared them, and their city was not destroyed until a later time, when the people had returned to their wicked ways.

John the Baptist was raised up by a special providence, at the first advent of Christ, to announce His immediate coming, and thus prepare the way before the Lord. The righteous in that generation were not only expecting Him to come soon, but they knew that their generation would not pass away till He did come.

Luke 2

²⁵ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

²⁶ And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

³⁶ And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

³⁷ And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

³⁸ And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, its inhabitants were warned, and the way of escape was pointed out. Jesus had said,

Luke 21

²⁰ When you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

And,

Matthew 24

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

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

All who accepted the warning, and gave heed to the sign given them by Christ, improved the opportunity given them for escape by the providential withdrawal of the Roman army, after it had for some time surrounded the city, and fled in haste to a place of safety.

Such has been the dealing of God in past ages, in reference to all important events; and so has He promised to deal with His people. Then we may inquire,

“Can anything be learned from the Bible relative to the time of the second advent?”

This is a grave inquiry, and, from the very nature of the subject, is worthy of close and candid investigation. We accept the Bible as a revelation from Heaven. What God has made known in that book ceases to be a mystery.

Deuteronomy 29

²⁹ The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.

If the Sacred Scriptures have revealed nothing concerning the time of the coming of our Lord, then we can know nothing concerning it. But if they have definitely informed us that we may know when...

Matthew 24

³³ ...it is near, even at the doors,

—then these things belong to us and to our children. Believing that He has given all the Holy Scriptures for a wise purpose,—for our learning and benefit,—we consider it not merely our privilege, but our duty, to search the Scriptures, with an earnest desire to know the whole revealed will of God.

By careful and prayerful attention to the prophetic discourse of the Son of God, given in answer to the inquiry of the disciples, the reader will, we trust, receive light upon this important ques-

tion. And as he reads the following pages, may the Holy Spirit open to his mind the beautiful harmony of the subject in its several parts, as fulfilled in the experience of the church from the time of the first advent of Christ to the close of human probation.



Simeon and Anna were Students of Prophecy
(C. W. Weisbrod after Rembrandt, 1628 - Wellcome Collection)

1. Exposition of Matthew 24

Matthew 24

³ What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

³³ When you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

PROBABLY there is no chapter in the Bible which speaks more fully and more definitely on the second coming of Christ, than *Matthew 24*; and there is no chapter in the entire Bible which has been the subject of greater controversy. But the nature of the controversy has almost entirely changed within the last forty years.

Forty years ago the controversy was between the Universalist and orthodox Christians. The Universalists denied that there is to be any future judgment and punishment. Of course they referred the 24th chapter of *Matthew* altogether to the destruction of Jerusalem—to the past.

Evangelical Christians then denied that it referred solely to the destruction of Jerusalem; they affirmed that it taught a personal coming of Christ, to reward His saints and to justly punish His foes. Those commentators who referred it in general to the destruction of Jerusalem in their expositions, still admitted that it had a further reference to the second advent and the end of the world. They uniformly applied a part of the Saviour's discourse in chapters 24 and 25 to the latter event.

The Universalists now take a different position; they have mostly become restorationists, admitting that there will be *some* punishment, even in the future. But they contend that it will be disciplinary or reformatory. They still maintain their former position that *Matthew 24* has no relation to that future punishment, but refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The opponents of Universalism, in the churches, have also changed their base, in part. While they yet contend that there will

be a future judgment and eternal punishment, they now deny that *Matthew 24* proves anything in regard to that day; or event, and affirm that it was all fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem. They are also extensively changing their position in regard to the nature of the second advent, many of them agreeing with the Universalists, saying that the advent is figurative or spiritual and has already taken place.

From present indications we think that this will very soon be the prevailing opinion in all the popular churches. Many of their ablest and most influential men now advocate this view. A little more change in the same direction will unite them fully with the Universalists in a denial of the future coming of Christ, of a personal, literal advent, and of any real tangible punishment of the wicked. They find it no more difficult to spiritualize the judgment and punishment, than the coming of the Lord. Very many of them now assert that the Bible expressions concerning the perdition of the wicked, such as those in *2 Thessalonians 1*, and *2 Peter 3*, and *Revelation 20*, are to be taken figuratively—not at all literally.

We are very confident that *Matthew 24* reaches to matters beyond the destruction of Jerusalem, and into time yet future; and that it refers to a literal, personal, visible coming again of our glorified Saviour. But the instruction which it contains was not given to prove this truth—that His coming will be personal or literal. This, now, has become the chief point of controversy on the chapter, whereas it is not made a point at all in the chapter. To this we shall call further attention hereafter.

Matthew 24

¹ And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple.

Jesus had been addressing the multitude, in the presence of His disciples. He had reproved the scribes and Pharisees for their sins, and had declared the doom of the Jews, their city, and their temple.² The disciples supposed that the temple would stand forever.

² *Matthew 23*.

And they called the attention of Christ to its magnificence and strength, as if to convince Him that He was mistaken.

Matthew 24

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

This statement from the Master could but deeply interest the disciples. And whether they supposed that the destruction of the temple, the coming of Christ, and the end of the age, would all occur at the same time, or at different periods, it matters not, since Christ, in His answer in this chapter, has distinctly spoken of each separately, and has given each its place in the prophetic history of events.

³ And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

These questions relate, first, to the destruction of Jerusalem; and second, to Christ's second coming at the end of the Christian age. Both were distinctly answered by our Lord. Jesus did not censure the disciples for desiring to look into the future, but answered their questions fully. As Christ was here speaking to His disciples, and not to the promiscuous multitude, His words in this prophetic discourse are addressed to the church. Two questions were asked by the disciples:

1. "When shall these things be?"

On this no controversy has ever been raised. It is universally conceded that it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, or the overthrow of the temple, of which He had but recently spoken.

2. "What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?"

This is but one question. The coming of Christ and the end of the world are so closely related that they may properly be em-

braced in one statement. See a parallel case in the first letter to the *Thessalonians*. The writer speaks of the coming of the Lord (the Lord himself), and adds:

1 Thessalonians 5

¹ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

The “times and seasons” of the advent, and the resurrection of which he had just spoken, are identical with those of the day of the Lord. This phrase, “the day of the Lord,” covers a period immediately subsequent to “the day of salvation,”³ this latter being applied to this present dispensation.

Several points of query, must be noticed:

The End of the World

Matthew 24

³ ...the end of the world.

It is asserted that this is a wrong translation; that it should be, “the end of the age,” and that it refers to “the Jewish age.” But, allowing that it should be rendered “end of the age,” it does not follow, by any means, that it refers to the Jewish age, or past dispensation. It certainly does not in:

Matthew 28

²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto *the end of the world*.

The promise that He will be with His ministers “until the end of the age,” certainly refers to that age in which they are to preach the gospel, for these words are in the gospel commission. It is the end of this same age to which *Matthew 24:14* refers. The question was in regard to the end of the world (or “age,” if preferred). He said,

³ *2 Corinthians 6:2*.

Matthew 24

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

This is decisive on the point for:

1. They were to tarry at Jerusalem, after receiving their commission, until the day of Pentecost, and then they were to be His witnesses to the nations;
2. The Jewish age ended before the preaching to the nations commenced; therefore it is impossible that *Matthew 24* and *28* should refer to that age.

An effort has been made to put forward the ending of the Jewish age to the destruction of Jerusalem. But it is exceedingly lame. To prove that, it will be necessary to show that the Christian dispensation was not fully opened until the destruction of Jerusalem! This is disproved by the whole body of the teachings of the New Testament. Paul settles the question in affirming that the peculiarities of that age were taken out of the way;

Colossians 2

¹⁴ *...nailed to the cross.*

If the gospel dispensation was not opened by the preaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and afterward by turning to the Gentiles to preach the gospel to them, then it has not yet been opened.

That is a settled question. The “end of the age,” or “end of the world,” in *Matthew 24*, is the utmost limit of the gospel dispensation. And we shall offer proof most positive that the second coming of Christ is at the end of this dispensation.

The Understanding of the Disciples

In connection with the claim set forth in regard to “the end of the world,” another is presented, as follows:

The disciples associated together all that the question contained, and placed “these things,” that is, the overthrow of the city, with the coming of Christ and the end of the world, or age.

But that is only conjecture. No one has a reason for affirming that such was the idea of the apostles. Here we might safely leave the affirmation, for no one is bound to disprove a conjecture. But we will further notice it.

If it were something more than conjecture,—if it were possible even to prove that such was their idea of the order of events then future,—that fact would not be evidence that they were or are to be fulfilled at the same time. For *we know* that at that time the disciples were laboring under mistakes in regard to the time and order of the fulfillment of future events.

Take as proof of this the parable which the Lord spoke when He was going into Jerusalem.⁴ They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. To correct this impression, the parable of the nobleman was spoken. If they understood the parable at the time when it was spoken, it did not fully do away with the impression in their minds, as is proved by what they did when they entered Jerusalem. We cannot believe that they would have hailed Him as the Son of David, and rejoiced before Him as a King in His triumph, if they had realized that He was going into the city to be condemned and crucified, as a malefactor. Palm branches and shouts of triumph did not attend the steps of the lowly and the condemned.

Again, after His resurrection, He reproved two of His disciples, who, though they had trusted that He would redeem Israel, were then sad and disheartened. They did not then understand that:

Luke 24

²⁶ Christ ought to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory.

⁴ Luke 19.

The suffering part was still a mystery to them. And some of the apostles were so slow to realize that which He had spoken to them, that they could hardly be persuaded that He was indeed risen from the dead. And after He had been with them full forty days, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom, they did not yet understand “the times and the seasons,”⁵ and therefore asked Him,

Acts 1

⁶ Lord, will You at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Would it, then, be surprising if they had been mistaken in the order of the events of which the Saviour spoke, at the time of His speaking, as recorded in *Matthew 24*? It would be quite natural for them to suppose that the holy city and the temple of the Most High would stand until the judgment and the final consummation. As we now see, had such been their opinion, it would not be proof that such was the chronological relation of these events. But, we repeat, that cannot be proved; it is only conjecture.

The Order of Events

It is necessary to notice that prophecy is not always fulfilled in the order in which it is given. This is often seen in the Old Testament, where the two advents are sometimes spoken of in such close connection that the reader might suppose they would occur nearly together. It is seen in the book of *Revelation*, which contains several lines of prophecy, each reaching down to the close of the present dispensation.

So in *Matthew 24*, and parallel chapters; we can only learn the correct application of some of the statements contained therein by comparing them with other scriptures. There is no dispute that they refer to the destruction of the temple and the overthrow of the city as well as to the second coming of the Lord.

⁵ 1 *Thessalonians* 5:1.

Matthew 24

⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

⁵ For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Mark the caution given by our Lord as He commences to answer these questions. Jesus knew the hearts of men, and that many impostors would arise, and deceive multitudes. He here warns His disciples, and guards them against the deceptions of corrupt and ambitious men.



2. National Calamities

Matthew 24

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

⁷ For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows.

NO POINT has been argued in favor of the past complete fulfillment of *Matthew 24*, with greater show of plausibility than this. Yet it remains decidedly against that view. Dr. Adam Clarke, for whose honesty and ability we entertain the highest respect, says:

This portended the dissensions, insurrections, and mutual slaughter of the Jews, and those of other nations, who dwell in the same cities together.

We say we respect Dr. Clarke, and it is no disparagement of him to believe there is more light now shining out from this chapter, with the greater investigation, and the later fulfillment of prophecy, than he saw in his day. We insist that all that he produced in regard to the dissensions among the Jews, their insurrections, etc., does not meet the demands of this text. On the latter part of the verse he says:

This portended the open wars of the different tetrarchies and provinces against each other.

In this chapter the Saviour refers us to Daniel the prophet, by whom we learn, what indeed we can learn from any history, that *the kingdom of Rome* was universal in power at the time of which we are speaking. The dissensions and insurrections of tribes and provinces were not sufficient to meet the prophecy.

But the Saviour further says:

Matthew 24

⁶ And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you be not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

The overthrow of Jerusalem was caused by an insurrection of one of the provinces of the Roman kingdom. But these are not even connectives of the final event which was mentioned by our Saviour. These things—wars and rumors of wars—shall come,

⁶ ...but the end is not yet.

And kingdom rising against kingdom—which, we insist, was not fulfilled by provincial insurrections,

⁸ ...are but the beginning of sorrows,

⁶ ...the end is not yet.

This point will be yet more clearly settled when others are considered.

Wars, Famines, not Definite Signs

Wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes have occurred at different periods since these words were spoken. Therefore, these, as they have existed, cannot be regarded as the special signs of the end.

It maybe urged, however; with a good degree of consistency, that the Scriptures teach that these calamities would exist in the last days to such an extent as to constitute a sign of the approaching judgment. We wish to keep the important fact distinctly before the mind, that the Sacred Scriptures teach clearly when men may not, and when they may, look for the second appearing of Christ.

The prophets had so uniformly associated such judgment as war, famine, pestilence, and earthquake with the last judgment, that the disciples were in danger of concluding that the end would immediately follow the first appearance of these calamities; hence the caution given:

Matthew 24

⁶ ...these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Here the disciples were clearly taught that they should not expect the end in their day. This fact is worthy of the candid attention of those who object to the proclamation of the second advent of Christ in the form of a special message. These sometimes assert that it was right for the disciples to look for Christ in their day, and that it has been scriptural and right for all Christians of each successive generation to look for His second appearing in their time. And they affirm that no more can be learned and believed upon this subject in our time than by the Christians of past generations, and that the public mind should not now be agitated upon this great question, any more than in all past time since the first advent of Christ.

We have seen that this position is incorrect so far as the early disciples were concerned. They are pointed to the distant future as the time when their Lord should come. They are assured that they need not be troubled at hearing of wars and rumors of wars:

⁶ For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Our Lord then guides the minds of His disciples, as we shall see in the examination of this chapter, down over the time of the great apostasy, and the long period of the rule of Papal Rome, before mentioning a sign of His second advent. He does not intimate that His people, during these long periods, may expect the end. No, not once.

Definite Signs in Sun, Moon, and Stars

But when He comes near our time, the Lord gives signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars, and adds,

³³ ...when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

History of Wars, Famines, Pestilences

Mark this: Our Lord does not mention wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes as signs of His second advent, but rather as events of common occurrence all the way through the Christian age; and history attests the fact that these calamities have covered at least seventeen centuries.

The following is from a work of Noah Webster, LL.D., published in 1799:⁶

- By famine and sword, 580,000 Jews were destroyed between 96 AD and 180 AD.
- In Antioch, from 96 AD to 180 AD, earthquakes destroyed 13 cities and over 100,000 lives.
- In Rome, 169 AD pestilence destroyed 10,000 daily.
- In Rome, 187 AD, pestilence appeared and continued, three years.
- In London, 310 AD, by famine, 40,000 died.
- In 446 AD, September 17th, an earthquake shook down walls of Constantinople, and 57 towers fell.
- In Rome, 539 AD, in one district 50,000 died.
- In Antioch 588 AD, an earthquake killed 60,000.
- In 542 AD, the plague killed 10,000 daily in Turkey.
- In 679 AD, a severe famine in England, three years.
- In 717 AD, in Constantinople, 300,000 died of plague.
- In 1005 AD, earthquakes three months, followed by pestilence, by which it is said one-third of the human race died.
- In 1077 AD, in Constantinople, so many died by plague and famine the living could not bury them.
- In 1124 AD, in Italy, there was such famine that the dead lay in the streets not buried; and in England one-third of the people died of plague.
- In 1294 AD, in England, thousands died of famine.

⁶ The plagues are corrected by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

- In 1346 AD, in London, 50,000 died of plague and famine, and were buried in one grave-yard; in Norwich, 50,000; in Venice, 100,000; in Florence, 100,000; in Eastern nations, 20,000,000. It was called the black death.
- In 1352 AD, in China, 900,000 died of famine.
- In 1450 AD, in Milan, 60,000 died of plague.
- In 1570 AD, in Moscow, 200,000 died of plague.
- In 1572 AD, in Lyons, 50,000 died of plague.
- In 1625 AD, in London, 35,000 died of plague.
- In 1656 AD, in Naples, 300,000 died of plague.
- In 1665 AD, in London, 68,000 died of plague.
- In 1755 AD, an earthquake destroyed the city of Lisbon, killing 50,000. In Mitylene, and the Archipelago, it shook down 2,000 houses. It shook all the Spanish coast. The plague followed, which destroyed 150,000 persons in Constantinople.

Persecutions

Matthew 24

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

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

Here is a brief description of the afflictions and martyrdoms of the church of Christ. Thousands of the faithful followers of Jesus were most cruelly put to death by Pagan Rome. Yet the prophecy doubtless applies more particularly to the long period of papal persecutions, in which many millions of Christians were put to death in the most cruel manner that wicked men and demons could invent. In these verses we are brought down over the long period of the martyrdom of the church of Jesus Christ, to near the present generation.

3. False Prophets

Matthew 24

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

IN THE common use of the word, a “prophet” is one that foretells; but the word sometimes means simply a “teacher.” True and false prophets may be known. The prophets of God are teachers of purity, reprovers of sin, and faithful in warning the people of coming dangers. The duties of those whom God calls to speak in His great name are clearly expressed by the sacred writers. We here quote from three of them:

Isaiah 58

¹ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

Joel 2

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord comes, for it is nigh at hand.

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

False prophets do not reprove the people for their sins, and do not warn them of coming danger; but they proclaim peace to the sinner. Their teachings lead from God and His word, and are such as please the unconverted mind. The inspired writers have also spoken definitely of the testimony and work of false prophets. We here give several for example:

Ezekiel 13

⁹ And my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel,

neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord God.

¹⁰ Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.

Jeremiah 6

¹³ For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one deals falsely.

¹⁴ They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace: when there is no peace.

Jeremiah 14

¹³ Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, You shall not see the sword, neither shall you have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

¹⁴ Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke unto them.

After stating the duty of the faithful servant of God to preach the word, to reprove, to rebuke, and to exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, the apostle says:

2 Timothy 4

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn, away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

That time has now fully come. The people choose pleasing fables, which do not disturb them in their sins, rather than the re-proving, searching declarations of the word of God. They love to be deceived by the teachings of false prophets, and...

Isaiah 30

¹⁰ ...say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.

The ears of the people are filled with the pleasing fables of the world's conversion, a good time coming, and that we are just entering the golden age. The threatenings of God's word on the proud, the haughty, the vain, the rich, the sinners in Zion, and those out of Zion, are kept back by the false teachers in these times. Many of them even dare to teach that the moral code of the ten commandments is abrogated. And as the result of such a course and such teaching, we see in the professed church of Jesus Christ that iniquity abounds.



Jesus warning about False Prophets
(*Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, 1593)

4. Iniquity Abounds

Matthew 24

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

IT IS EVIDENT that both the abounding of iniquity and the waxing cold of the love of many, are fulfilled in the professed church of Jesus Christ. Men must first experience the love of God and of heavenly things before that love can grow cold. Hence, common, unconverted sinners are not here referred to as apostatizing.

And, again, the prevalence of iniquity in the unconverted world alone, should stimulate the church to greater diligence and more godliness, instead of being a cause of apostasy. Hence, the iniquity here mentioned is in the very heart of the professed church, diffusing its chilling influence through the whole body. As the result, the love of many has grown cold. With this agree the words of the apostle:

2 Timothy 3

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³ Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴ Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away.

Here is a catalog of eighteen sins, all resting upon those who have a form of godliness. These are not infidels and common worldly sinners, for they have not a form of godliness; but they are men and women professing to be followers of Jesus Christ. And although they make a profession of piety as high as heaven, these very sins lie at their doors. And by reason of their example,

and their chilling influence, many are led from the humble path to heaven, and their love waxes cold.

Matthew 24

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

The word *end*, wherever used in this chapter, refers to the end of the ages, and to nothing else. It is the end associated in the New Testament with the second appearing of Jesus Christ. If it be urged that the word *end* has reference to the close of mortal life, then we reply that the disciples did not ask their Lord when they should die, but,

⁶ What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

And it would be strange indeed to suppose that the word *end*, in verse 14, meant death. If any think such a position admissible, let them read it into the text, as follows:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall death come.”

Absurdity!

5. The Preaching of the Gospel

Matthew 24

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

THIS is the first sign of the end given by our Lord in answer to the question,

³ What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

But this verse is supposed by some to prove that all men will be converted, and that there will then follow one thousand years in which...

Hebrews 8

¹¹ ...all shall know [the Lord], from the least to the greatest.

But the text does not say that every individual will receive this gospel, or even that all will hear it. It does not state that anyone will be converted and made holy by it, and we find it far from intimating that the world will be converted, and remain so for a period of one thousand years. The text simply states:

1. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world;"
2. "for a witness unto all nations;"
3. "and *then* [not one thousand years later, nor three hundred and sixty-five thousand, but *then*] shall the end come."

If we understand the phrase, "this gospel of the kingdom," to be the gospel in the common acceptation of the word, is not the work very nearly accomplished? What continent or island is there where the gospel has not been preached? Where is there a nation that has not heard it? The Bible has been translated into more than three hundred languages and dialects, and has been carried to every quarter of the globe. Wherever the mariner has

discovered an inhabited island, or the explorer has found a new tribe, there missionaries have followed with the gospel.

But if the term, “this gospel of the kingdom,” be understood as applying to the proclamation of the second advent of Christ, and the establishment of His everlasting kingdom, as the grand consummation of the gospel, the fulfillment is nearly as evident. And it seems necessary so to understand the passage, as it was given in answer to the question,

Matthew 24

³ What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

There is abundant testimony to show that the good news of the soon appearing of Christ has been preached in all parts of the world.

Daniel 12

⁴ But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

During the present century, the book of *Daniel* has been unsealed, knowledge of the prophecies has increased, and many have “run to and fro” proclaiming that the advent of Christ is near at hand. In both Europe and America, men of faith and prayer have been led to study the prophecies, and, tracing down the inspired record, they have found convincing evidence that the end of all things is at hand. The Spirit of God has urged them to give the warning, and far and near has been proclaimed the message of “the everlasting gospel.”

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.

In 1821, Joseph Wolff, the well-known missionary to the world, began to proclaim the doctrine of the second advent. Wolff was a German Jew, the son of a rabbi. He early became a Christian, and

determined to go as a missionary to his people. After studying at Rome and other places, under the supervision of the Catholic Church, he came to England, and joined the English Church, in 1819. After two years' study, he entered upon his mission, and for twenty-four years he traveled and preached untiringly penetrating as far east as India. Among Jews, Turks, Parsees, Hindus, and many other nationalities and races, he preached the coming and reign of the Messiah.

In Germany, the doctrine of the second advent had been taught in the eighteenth century by Bengel, a minister of the Lutheran Church, who, from the study of the *Apocalypse*, arrived at the belief that the coming of Christ was near at hand. Through Bengel's writings, many embraced the doctrine of the Lord's soon coming. Colonies of Germans carried the belief into Russia, and it is still largely held by the German churches of that country.

Hundreds of pious men have proclaimed the doctrine in England and America, and publications on the subject have been sent to every missionary station on the globe.

E. R. Pinney, in his *Exposition of Matthew Twenty-four*, published in the year 1848, says:

As early as 1842, second-advent publications had been sent to every missionary station in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, both sides of the Rocky Mountains. We find this doctrine in Tartary, about twenty-five years ago, and the time for the coming of Christ to be in 1844.

This fact is obtained from an Irish missionary in Tartary to whom the question was put by a Tartar priest when Christ would come the second time. And he made answer that he knew nothing at all about it. The Tartar priest expressed great surprise at such an answer from a missionary who had come to teach them the doctrines of the Bible, and remarked that he taught "everybody who had a Bible might know that."

The Tartar priest then gave his views, stating that Christ, he thought, would come about 1844 AD. The missionary wrote home a statement of the facts, which was published in the *Irish*

Magazine, in 1821. The commanders of our vessels, and the sailors, tell us they touch at no point where they find this proclamation has not preceded them, and frequent inquiries respecting it are made of them.

The *Advent Shield*, pp. 86, 87, says:

We look upon the proclamation which has been made as being the cry of the angel who proclaimed, "*The hour of His judgment is come.*" *Revelation* 14:6, 7. It is a sound which is to reach all nations; it is the proclamation of "the everlasting gospel," or "this gospel of the kingdom." In one shape or other, this cry has gone abroad through the earth wherever human beings are found, and we have had opportunity to hear of the fact.

But it will be asked,

"Is the news that such a truth is preached a sufficient proclamation to fulfill the prophecy?"⁷

The answer is,

"If it was sufficient in the days of the apostles, it is now."

That it was then, is clear from *Acts* 19:8-10, where Paul preached or taught in Ephesus two years, so that all they in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord Jesus. They could not all have heard a sermon, but they heard the sound of the gospel. In this sense, no doubt, the gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world.

We still wait for the approaching end. And when the purpose of God in the proclamation of the coming reign of Christ shall be fully accomplished, *then* will the end come.

⁷ *Revelation* 14:6-7; *Matthew* 24:14.

6. The Destruction of Jerusalem

OUR Lord having passed over the important events in the Christian age down to the end, in verses 6-14, goes back and introduces the destruction of Jerusalem, in verse 15, in answer, to the inquiry, “When shall these things be?”

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whose reads, let him understand);

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

¹⁷ Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house;

¹⁸ Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

¹⁹ And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

²⁰ But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day.

The “abomination of desolation” is called “armies” in *Luke* 21:20, and refers to the Roman army:

Luke 21

²⁰ And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

This desolating power is spoken of by *Daniel* as follows:

Daniel 9

²⁶ And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

²⁷ ...and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate [margin, “desolator”].

Here is a clear prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. Our Lord referred to the book of *Daniel*, and taught His disciples to understand that when they should see

what was there predicted take place, they must make their escape.

The flight of the Christians of Judea to the mountains would be attended with difficulties. And their subsequent condition would be that of hardship and suffering. The Lord knew this, and gave them the instructions and warnings necessary. The statement of verse 19 was given to save them from unnecessary woe.



The Roman Siege of Jerusalem
(Children's Bible Cards, 1896-1913)

7. The Great Tribulation

Matthew 24

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

IT IS CONTENDED that the greatest tribulation that ever befell the Jews was in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Against this we interpose two objections:

Not Fulfilled in the Destruction of Jerusalem

First, it is by no means clear that the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans was the greatest tribulation the Jews ever suffered. All the scenes of horror described by historians, as occurring at that time, are by the inspired records ascribed also to the conquest of the Babylonians. See the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah, especially:

Lamentations 4

¹⁰ The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Also,

Daniel 9

¹¹ The curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.

¹² And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us; by bringing upon us a great evil; for under the whole heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem.

¹³ As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us.

The Gathering of the Saints

Second, at the coming of Christ, as noted in *Matthew 24*, the elect of God, the saints of Christ, will be gathered...

Matthew 24

³¹ ...from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

This *cannot* be referred to the destruction of Jerusalem. Nothing occurred at that time to which it will possibly apply. Paul, speaking of the coming of Christ, mentions the same fact, as follows:

2 Thessalonians 2

¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by *our gathering together unto Him*.

How did the Lord come to Jerusalem at the time of its overthrow? We are answered,

“It was a figurative coming.”

If it was not literal and actual, what was the nature of the figure used? It is said that He visited the Jews in judgment; that Titus, or the Roman army, really executed the judgment upon the doomed city. Then the coming of Titus, or of the Roman army, is represented as the coming of Christ? Was it a fact, then, that the saints of God, the followers of Christ, from the four winds, were *gathered together unto Titus*, in that day? This must have been so if the coming of Titus represented the coming of Christ, or if Christ came figuratively in the person of Titus.

It is as sure as the Scriptures are true that the saints will be gathered unto Christ in the day of His coming; which did not occur, even in a figure, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem; for the saints, instead of being gathered unto Christ, or to any person or thing which came to Jerusalem as His representative; were scattered from the city, fleeing from the presence of that which represented Christ! So absurd is that theory.

The fact of Christ's coming, and the gathering of the saints at that time, being stated alike in *Matthew 24* and *2 Thessalonians 2*, proves that these chapters refer to the same time and event. We therefore in this connection notice a circumstance mentioned by Paul, as one to take place before the Lord comes. And to this

point we call the special attention of all who deny the literal advent of our Lord.

The Rise of the Man of Sin

Paul cautions his brethren not to look for the coming of Christ until the man of sin is revealed. Who, or what, is that man of sin? Paul wrote this about eighteen years before Jerusalem was overthrown. What arose within these eighteen years which filled the outline of this prophecy? Nothing at all.

The, old and well-accepted view of the Protestant reformers,—that this man of sin is the “supreme pontiff” of Rome,—is every way reasonable, and to produce a harmony of the prophetic scriptures, is unavoidable. Notice these points:

1. Paul wrote only eighteen years before the overthrow of Jerusalem, but he looked forward to the future for the revealing of the man of sin. The elements were then already operating, but hindering causes had to be removed. Consequently, as he said, the coming of the Lord was not “impending” in his day.
2. It was not merely a sinful man to be revealed, there were many such then; “*that man of sin*”—who legalizes and enforces sin, not merely one who breaks law, but one who overrides and breaks down law—such has been the character of the Roman pontiff. Many readers will remember his indictment on this point by Alexander Campbell, in his debate with Bishop Purcell.⁸
3. Exalting himself above God. This he has done, not, merely by assuming the prerogatives of God, but by legislating on the law of God, which can be done only by a superior, in fact or assumed.

⁸ See *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion* (between Alexander Campbell, Bethany, VA. and the Right Reverend John B. Purcell, Bishop of Cincinnati), 1837.

4. Claiming to be God. See the titles which have been given to, and assumed by, the pope; and most recently, the assumption of infallibility.

These, and other specifications of prophecy, have been fulfilled by the popes of Rome, and by no other. And we shall find that the proofs grow even stronger and clearer as we proceed.

Tribulation of the Church

Matthew 24

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

The “great tribulation” mentioned here is that of the church of Christ, and not the tribulation of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem. We offer the following reasons:

1. GREATER THAN ANY PREVIOUS SUFFERING

It is a fact that the tribulation of the Christian Church, especially under the reign of the Papacy, was greater than God’s people had suffered before “since the beginning of the world.” The tribulation of the Christian church has been greater than it will ever be again. True, a time of trouble “such as never was,” spoken of in *Daniel* 12:1, is coming upon the wicked; but we find in the same verse this blessed promise,

Daniel 12

¹ ...and at that time your people shall be delivered.

The tribulation of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem was not greater than the world will ever witness. The vials of Jehovah’s unmingled wrath are yet to be poured out, not upon the people of one nation only, but upon the guilty inhabitants of all nations.

Jeremiah 25

³³ The slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried.

2. DANIEL 12:1 POINTS TO GREATER WORLDWIDE TROUBLE

If this tribulation be applied to the Jews, or to any other class of unbelieving men, it cannot be harmonized with *Daniel* 12:1, which speaks of the time of trouble such as never was, when Michael shall stand up. Certainly there cannot be two times of trouble at different periods, greater than ever was or ever would be. Therefore the “tribulation” spoken of in *Matthew* 24:21, 29, applies to the church of Christ, extending down through the 1260 years of papal persecution; and the “trouble” mentioned in *Daniel* 12:1, to the unbelieving world, to be experienced by them in the future.

3. TRIBULATION SHORTENED FOR THE ELECT'S SAKE

The period of tribulation was shortened for the elect's sake. This cannot refer to the Jews, for their house had been pronounced desolate. They were left of God in their hardness of heart and blindness of mind: Says Paul,

Acts 13

⁴⁶ Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

The elect were the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. And where were they when tribulation was upon the Jews? They had fled to the mountains. It is absurd, then, to say that the days of tribulation of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem, were shortened for the sake of the elect, who had fled from the place of tribulation.

4. TRIBULATION TO COMMENCE WITH CHRISTIANS

The connection between verses 20 and 21 shows that the tribulation was to commence with those Christians who were to flee out of the city.

Matthew 24

²⁰ But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day;

²¹ For then shall be great tribulation...

Our Lord here speaks of the tribulation which His people would suffer from the time of their flight onward. We follow them in their flight to the mountains, and then pass along down through the noted persecutions of the church of God under Pagan Rome, and we see, indeed, *tribulation*. And when we come to the period of papal persecution, we see them suffering the most cruel tortures and dying the most dreadful deaths that men could inflict. This last period is especially noted in prophecy.

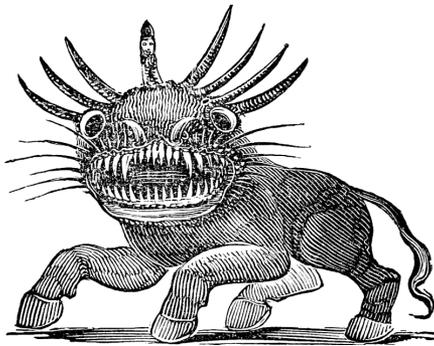
5. THE PAPACY POINTED OUT IN DANIEL

The prophet *Daniel* saw the Papacy, its blasphemy, its arrogance, its work of death on the saints, and its duration as a persecuting power, under the symbol of the little horn.

Daniel 7

²⁵ And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

It is generally admitted that “a time and times and the dividing of time” is 1260 years. Commencing 538 AD, the 1260 years reached to 1798 AD, when Berthier, a French general, entered Rome in triumph. The pope was taken prisoner, and died in exile. Since that time the Papacy has had no power to wear out the saints of the Most High. Here ended the days of the tribulation spoken of by our Lord.



8. The Days of Tribulation Shortened

Matthew 24

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

THE Papacy was clothed with civil power to punish heretics for 1260 years; and had not the period of tribulation of the elect in the providence of God been shortened, the martyrdom of the church would have continued to 1798, in which event, according to the Scriptures, no flesh of the elect would have been saved.

But the reformation under Martin Luther and those associated with this great reformer, modified this tribulation, and continued to restrain the rage and consume the power of the Papacy until 1773, when the suppression of the Jesuits put an end to the tribulation.

In this prophetic discourse of our Lord, we are brought down into the eighteenth century, very near the present time. We should naturally expect, then, that the instructions and warnings of the next verses would be applicable to this generation.



9. Lo, Here, and Lo, There

AFTER speaking of the great tribulation, the Saviour said:

Matthew 24

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

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

²⁵ Behold, I have told you before.

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

²⁷ For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

This is a very important and much-abused part of this great prophecy. Its connection and obvious intention are generally quite disregarded; when it is used, it mostly so applied as to teach the opposite of the idea presented by the Saviour. Because of the importance of its testimony on the question under consideration, we feel warranted in noticing it at some length.

A Future Coming

When offering proof from the Bible that “the coming of the Lord draws nigh,” we are often met with the remark that:

“We are commanded not to follow the lo here’s and lo there’s.”

That this is a perversion of the Scriptures is easily shown. The only text in the Bible from which it is professedly drawn is that above quoted; and the only caution given in the text is against those who say,

Matthew 24

²³ ...here is Christ.

But Seventh-day Adventists never say so. To argue in favor of His future coming is to argue that *He is not here*—that He has not

yet come. Therefore the caution is not against us or against our doctrine.

A Literal Coming

They who deny our position, and contend for a figurative or spiritual coming of the Son of man, are the very ones against whom the warning is spoken. Some say the Lord came in 70 AD, at the overthrow of Jerusalem. Then in that day they could in truth say,

Matthew 24

²³ Lo, here is Christ...

But our Saviour said,

²³ ...believe it not.

And we obey His word,—we do not believe it. And some say His coming is at the death of a saint,—that the coming of Christ to each one is at his death. Even learned ministers say so. If that be so, His coming is not a public event, but is literally “in the secret chambers.” To this also the Saviour says,

²⁶ ...believe it not.

And again we heed His word,—we do not believe it. We hope that they who contend for such forced and unnatural constructions of the Saviour’s language do not intentionally make nonsense of His words, but that such a construction is nonsensical it is easy to show. When the Lord said of John,

John 21

²² If I will that he tarry [literally, abide or remain] till I come, what is that to you?

—the disciples thought that John *should* remain till He came, and therefore thought *he would not die*. That is to say, that so far from the coming of Christ meaning the death of His servants, *they who remain till His coming will not die at all*. For further proof of this, see:

John 11

²⁴ Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

²⁵ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

²⁶ And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

1 Corinthians 15

⁵¹ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

But if it were so that John should live till Christ's coming, and if it were also true that Christ's coming would be when John died, then the language of the Lord, correctly interpreted, would read,

“If I will that he live till he die, what is that to you?”

Sure enough, what is that to anybody, even to John himself? We wish that a view of its absurdity would lead those who teach thus to correct their theology and confess their error.

A Security from Deceptions

Adventists, or literalists, are the only ones who cannot be deceived by false christs. They who take the Scriptures literally, who believe the coming of Christ:

- Is a literal, personal, visible coming;
- Is yet future;
- Will be with wondrous power and glory, such as to strike His enemies with awful dread;

And that at His coming:

- “All kindreds of the earth will wail because of Him,” when “every eye shall see Him;”⁹
- The graves will be opened and the dead will be raised;
- The living saints will be changed to immortality, and all be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

They, we say, who believe these things *cannot* be deceived by false christs and by counterfeit comings, because *they cannot counterfeit these events*, while they who spiritualize His coming, or make it mean *anything whatever* but a person visibly coming, are open to the deceptions against which the Saviour warns us.

Doctrines That Decieve

The fact or event against which the Saviour warns us is fulfilled by those who spiritualize the coming of Christ, who say *He is here*, coming at death or in any other event past or present. But most notably is it fulfilled in these last days by Spiritualists, who assign the name or title of Christ to a *class*, and deny that it specially belongs to an individual, or to Jesus of Nazareth. We have conversed with those who professed to be christs, and they actually...

Matthew 24

²⁴ ...show great signs and wonders.

Multitudes are deceived by them. Christ said that if possible they would deceive the very elect. Many who consider themselves of the elect—who profess to love the Lord and to believe the Scriptures—are deceived by them, because they have imbibed

⁹ Revelation 1:7.

the erroneous views of the nature of the second coming of Christ, and of the nature of man, and of the true source of immortality.

Not Fulfilled by the Roman Army

As has been noticed, they who say the coming of Christ was at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, assert that His coming was figurative—He came in judgment to the Jews. The judgment was inflicted by Titus and the Roman army; therefore Titus and that army *represented* Christ in His coming. To suit such a supposed fact we will read the caution given by our Saviour:

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Roman army, believe it not,—go not forth. For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines unto the west, so shall the coming of the Roman army be.”

But we insist that the Roman army never came to Jerusalem in any such manner. Yet in just such a manner will the coming of the Son of man be:

- He shall come in power and great glory;¹⁰
- He shall come in the glory of His Father,¹¹ and in the glory of the holy angels;¹²
- All the holy angels shall come with Him.¹³
- His coming will be as glorious and resplendent as the lightning.

When Jesus revealed himself to Saul of Tarsus, there was a light above the brightness of the sun:

Acts 26

¹³ At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

¹⁰ *Matthew* 24:30.

¹¹ *Matthew* 16:27.

¹² *Luke* 9:26.

¹³ *Matthew* 25:31.

Of the angel who appeared at the tomb after the resurrection of Jesus it is said,

Matthew 28

³ His countenance was like lightning.

And Ezekiel says of the messengers of the Most High,

Ezekiel 1

¹⁴ [They] ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

When Jesus comes in the glory of His Father, with such a glorious train attendant, His coming will indeed be as the lightning coming out of the east and shining to the west, and no one will have more occasion or opportunity to say to his fellow, "See here," than one would to call another to behold a flash of lightning coursing through the heavens.

What a pity that men will so mystify the truth of God as to denude this precious doctrine of all the glory with which the Scriptures have invested it.



10. The Advent Will Be Literal

THE advent of the Lord will be literal and personal. It is *literal* in distinction from a supposed figurative or representative coming, either at Jerusalem's overthrow or at any other time. It is *personal* in distinction from any supposed spiritual, secret, or intangible coming, for which many now contend.

A Personal Coming

Analogy calls for a literal, personal coming. His first coming was literal. It is claimed, and with much show of reason, too, that His first coming had mostly to do with the spiritual condition of men. Yet His coming was literal and physical.

His second coming will have mostly to do with the physical condition of men. Why, then, shall not His second coming be also literal—in the flesh? No repentance or pardon is offered at His second coming. It will be for “the redemption of our body”;¹⁴ the resurrection and translation of the saints, and the overthrow of His enemies. We say further:

The Resurrection of the Dead

The resurrection of the dead will take place at His coming. That is not spiritual it is literal. Many now attempt to spiritualize the resurrection, but we can see neither reason nor propriety in the effort.

1. Jesus said that He was the resurrection,¹⁵ and proved the truth of His assertion, and showed the nature of the resurrection, by immediately calling Lazarus from the grave.

2. When Jesus himself was resurrected, He left the tomb vacant where He had lain, and the angel who said He was risen invited the disciples to examine the place where He lay, to be thus assured that He was not there but had risen.

¹⁴ *Romans* 8:23.

¹⁵ *John* 11:25.

3. They who deny the bodily resurrection assert that the resurrection means the rising of the spirit out of the body at death, which *cannot* be true, for Jesus was raised the third day after death. It did not take His spirit three days to leave His body after He died!

4. When Jesus referred to His own resurrection under the figure of raising the temple,

John 2

²¹ He spoke of the temple of His body.

5. After His resurrection He showed them His hands and His feet to identify himself to them, and invited them to handle Him, —to examine the wounds in His hands and His side. What more could be done to prove His bodily identity, and the physical nature of the resurrection?

But His resurrection is the surety—He is the first-fruit¹⁶—of the resurrection of them that are His. As was His resurrection, so will be theirs. At that day,

1 Corinthians 15

⁵³ ...this mortal shall put on immortality.

We leave it with the spiritualizers whether that is spoken of the spirit or the body.

Scripture Demands It

The Scripture expressions demand a personal coming.

1. Jesus said He came down from heaven, was going back to His Father, and would come again. If His coming and returning were literal, so will be His coming again.

2. The angel said when He ascended on high, and a cloud received Him out of their sight,

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:23.

Acts 1

¹¹ *This same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

We cannot imagine how anything but a bold perversion of language, or a peremptory denial of it, can make of this other than an actual, real, and bodily coming.

3. Paul said, speaking of His coming,

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ *The Lord himself* shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

This was not fulfilled by Titus, nor yet even by the Lord himself; but it will be.

Glorification of the Saints

Paul said,

Colossians 3

⁴ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.

The saints were not glorified at the destruction of Jerusalem. Peter said,

1 Peter 5

⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

No saint received a crown of glory at the destruction of Jerusalem, for the Chief Shepherd did not then appear. Jesus said, speaking by His servant John, nearly thirty years after the destruction of Jerusalem,

Revelation 22

¹² Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

This agrees with His words in:

Luke 14

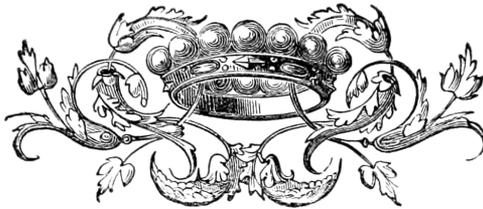
¹⁴ ...for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Recompense shall be given at the resurrection of the just, which, as has been shown, takes place when the Lord comes.

Hope for the Future

Taking the negative, we inquire if the coming of the Lord, with all its attendant glory, the resurrection and translation of the saints, the gathering of the saints unto the Lord himself, the bestowing of fadeless crowns of glory to the faithful,—if all this took place at the destruction of Jerusalem, what have we to hope for in the future? All the promises of redemption, glory, and immortality, cluster around the coming of the Lord. If that is already past, what is our hope?

It is not difficult to show that they who have no part in the second coming of Christ have no part in His glory, no crown of life, no recompense of reward. Giving that away, they rob themselves of all.



11. Signs of the Lord's Coming

WE HAVE now come to the more direct answer to the question,

Matthew 24

³ What shall be the sign of your coming?

This answer is given in verses 29-31:

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken;

³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

³¹ And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

This contains the most specific answer, though another class of signs has already been noticed, which are fulfilled in modern Spiritualism. The close connection of the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, to the coming of Christ and events related to it, show that here we have the answer to the question of the disciples. As we hold the advent of Christ to be a literal coming, so we hold that these signs are literal, according to the first and obvious meaning of the terms used.

Not Symbolic

There is no consistency in the view that they are figures or symbols. A teacher in a theological college in one of the Western States told us, when asked, of what they were symbols, that the sun meant the civil power of the Jews; the moon, the ecclesiastical power; and the stars, the great men of that nation. This would make the Saviour say, in the year 29 AD, under the reign of Tiberius and Pilate, that sometime in the future, or when

Jerusalem was destroyed, in 70 AD, the civil power of the Jews should be obscured or lost! The absurdity of this declaration it is difficult to equal, for everyone must know that they had not even a vestige of civil power at that time to lose. They had not power to punish one whom their highest tribunal had judged worthy of death, and they acknowledged Caesar as their only king.

Not Fulfilled in Jerusalem

It has been urged by those holding the Universalist view, that great signs were shown just before the capture and destruction of Jerusalem, and that these fulfilled this prophecy. Dr. Clarke mentions some in his notes on verses 6 & 7. But so far from these being signs of His coming, or of the end, the Saviour distinctly says of them:

Matthew 24

⁶ ...the end is not yet.

⁸ These are the beginning of sorrows.

The signs of verse 29 are closely related to His coming, and therefore here is found the answer to the question under consideration.

We are told by authors that certain signs and omens did take place *before* the destruction of Jerusalem. See *Clarke's Commentary*. And then they also claim that "the tribulation" of this chapter was the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. But that *cannot* be true, for the text says,

²⁹ Immediately *after* the tribulation...

...these signs shall appear. It is supposed that the signs denoted the coming destruction, or tribulation. But that is not the case. The signs are *after* the tribulation, and denote the approach of another event. The theory which we are calling in question would make it appear that the signs of Christ's coming are given after His coming! But neither His coming nor that tribulation relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are not so inconsistent as that view would make it appear.

Signs in the Heavens

If it be indeed true that the signs of verse 29 are literal, that must decide the controversy; and that they are literal there is one point of proof which seems quite conclusive. In *Luke 21* the same things are spoken of in the following manner:

Luke 21

²⁵ 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 signs in the sun, moon, and stars, are distinct from the things upon the earth,—they are not fulfilled among the nations of the earth. Here is a fact the conclusion of which is unavoidable. Compare with:

Acts 2

¹⁹ And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:

²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.

Harmony of the Literal View

We will now notice the harmony of the literal view:

1. Paul said there should come a great apostasy before the coming of the Lord. Christ said the same in *Matthew 24*.
2. Paul said that at the coming of Christ the saints will be gathered together unto Him. The Saviour said the same in *Matthew 24*.
3. Paul said that when the Lord comes, the holy angels will come with Him. *2 Thessalonians 1*. The Saviour said the same thing in *Matthew 24*, and in 16:27, and in 25:31.

Again, in speaking of the apostasy and its fruits, Paul said that a great antichristian power should arise, which should continue till the time of the Lord's coming.¹⁷ Daniel speaks of the same power, gives it the same characteristics of self-exaltation and blasphemy, says it shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and

¹⁷ *2 Thessalonians 2:1-12*.

practice and prosper till the time comes that the saints possess the kingdom.¹⁸

The Saviour speaks of the same persecution,—the great tribulation upon “the elect,”—and says that the saints will possess the kingdom when He comes. Compare further:

Matthew 25

³¹ When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory:

³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

1 Corinthians 15

⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

⁵¹ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

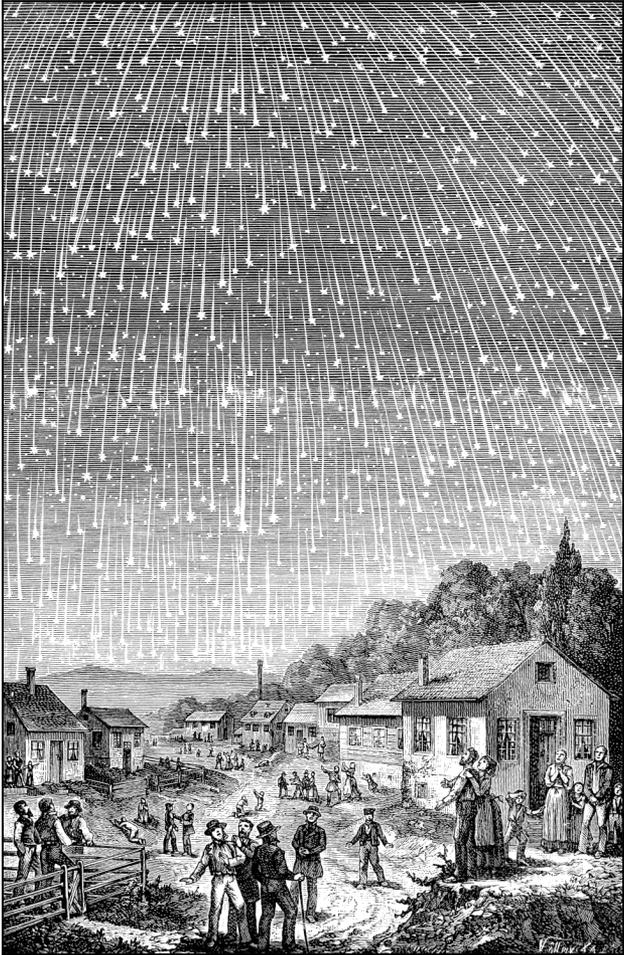
⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The saints were not called to “inherit the kingdom” at the destruction of Jerusalem; “all nations” were not gathered at that time to have judgment passed upon them.

The signs in the heavens came *after* the tribulation. The greatest tribulation the saints of Christ ever suffered, was under the Roman power. It was severe under Pagan Rome, but far more terrible and destructive, as it was of longer continuance, under Papal Rome. Under the influence of the German Reformation in the sixteenth century, this tribulation began to wane. It ceased early in the eighteenth century.

¹⁸ *Daniel* 7:8, 11, 24-26; 8:22-25.

In the latter part of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century, the signs in the heavens were fulfilled. They are not signs of the tribulation, nor is the tribulation connected with the coming of Christ. They are signs of His coming, and they stand between the tribulation and His coming. His coming is now near, for these signs are fulfilled.



The Meteor Shower of November 1833
(Bible Readings 1888)

12. Fulfillment of the Signs

The Sun Darkened

Matthew 24

²⁹ ...the sun shall be darkened.

WE HAVE but little to say on this point—not that there is not much to say, but that so much has already been said. The dark day is a common phrase to denote the 19th of May, 1780. Not long since a few were living who saw it. The writer well remembers that, in his boyhood, aged people made frequent mention of it in relating notable points in their experience. Four testimonies only we here give, from authorities of indisputable reliability. A publication of the American Tract Society, entitled, *Life of Edward Lee*, says:

In the month of May, 1780, there was a very terrific dark day in New England, 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 their only refuge from the wrath to come, and spent the gloomy hours in earnest prayer for the distressed multitude.¹⁹

Had the author and publishers of this work intended to give a forcible illustration of the fulfillment of this prophecy, they could not better have chosen their language for that purpose. But they had no such intention—they had not this prophecy in view at all, which makes their testimony all the more emphatic as evidence on the question.

Dr. Tenney, in 1785, in writing to the *Historical Society* concerning that day, says:

¹⁹ Tract No. 379 of American Tract Society, *Life of Edward Lee*.

Although the *uncommon darkness* which attracted the attention of all ranks of people in this part of the country on the 19th of May, 1780, was a phenomenon which several gentlemen of considerable literary abilities have endeavored to solve, yet, I believe, you will agree with me *that no satisfactory solution has yet appeared.*

Herschel, the great astronomer, says:

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

The Moon Obscured

Matthew 24

²⁹ ...and the moon shall not give her light.

In New England, where the sun's darkening was most noted, the moon, though full, was totally obscured till midnight, when it came out with brilliancy. Here is the evidence that the darkness lasted fourteen hours—from 10 AM of the 19th till the midnight following. Many descriptions have been given of the intense darkness of the night. One said that if every luminous body had been struck out of existence, he could not imagine that the darkness could have been more intense.

Almost, if not altogether alone, as the most mysterious and, as yet unexplained phenomenon 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 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 birds to their nests, and the cattle returning 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.²⁰

²⁰ *Our First Century.*

It was startling, and overpowering, and even painful to the senses, because of its intensity. And *learned men say it cannot be explained or accounted for*. We think it admits of just one explanation: the God of heaven, the Ruler of nature, hung out these signs in the heavens to teach the student of His word that the Son of God would soon make His second advent to this world. And we are thankful that the warning has not been in vain. The marked fulfillment of the prophecies has led thousands to look, to hope for, and to rejoice in, the “blessed hope” of the coming of the dear Redeemer.

Falling of the Stars

Matthew 24

²⁹ ...and the stars shall fall from heaven.

We may be permitted to notice this more particularly, as efforts have been made to show that no past fulfillment can meet the requirements of this part of the prophecy. We believe that it was fulfilled in the fall of 1833.

Professor Olmstead, of Yale College, said that they who were so fortunate as to witness the falling stars on November 13, 1833, probably beheld the greatest display of celestial fire-works that has ever been since the creation of the world—certainly the greatest that has ever occurred within the time covered by the annals of history. It was more than a “shower,” as it has been called. They began to fall as early as 11 o’clock, and increased until they truly resembled a shower, but of many hours’ continuance. We witnessed them in all their glory for nearly three hours, till they were obscured by the dawning day.

And when the day dispelled the appearance, they were still falling as numerous as ever, as was proved by their being visible in the west when the advancing light of the sun rendered them invisible in the east. During their fall, the largest and brightest would leave a mark of light down the heavens like a mark of phosphorus on a wall in a dark room. When it became so light

that the mass of them could no longer be seen, one would occasionally make its presence known by such a penciling of the sky.

We here give an extract from an article written by Henry Dana Ward, in regard to the falling stars of November 13, 1833:

At the cry, "Look out of the window," I sprang from a deep sleep, and with wonder saw the east lighted up with the dawn and meteors. The zenith, the north, and the west also, showed the falling stars, in the very image of one thing, and only one, I ever heard of. I called to my wife to behold; and while robing, she exclaimed, "See how the stars fall!" I replied, "That is the wonder!" and we felt in our hearts that it was a sign of the last days.

For, truly, "the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." *Revelation* 6:13. This language of the prophet has always been received as metaphorical. Yesterday, it was literally fulfilled.

The ancients understood by *aster*, in Greek, and *stella*, in Latin, the smaller lights of heaven. The refinement of modern astronomy has made the distinction between, stars of heaven and meteors of heaven. Therefore, the idea of the prophet, as it is expressed in the original Greek, was literally fulfilled in the phenomenon of yesterday.

And how did they fall? Neither myself, nor one of the family, heard any report; and were I to hunt through nature for a simile, I could not find one so apt to illustrate the appearance of the heavens, as that which St. John uses in the prophecy before quoted.

The stars fell "even as a fig-tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Here is the exactness of the prophet.

The falling stars did not come as if from several trees shaken, but from *one*; those which appeared in the east, fell toward the east; those which appeared in the north, fell toward the north; those which appeared in the west, fell toward the west; and those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the park), fell toward the south. And they fell not as the *ripe* fruit falls. Far from it; but they flew, they were *cast*, like the unripe fruit which at first refuses to leave the branch, and when, under a

violent pressure it does break its hold, it flies swiftly, *straight off*, descending; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of other, as they are thrown with more or less force; but each one falls on its own side of the tree. Such was the appearance of the above phenomenon to the inmates of my house.²¹

No description can give any conception of the grandeur and glory of the scene. As our memory recalls it, we feel that the power of God was manifest to make known to the student of prophecy that the coming of the Son of man is near.

By comparing the testimony of the evangelists we find these signs still more definitely located. We have noticed that the greatest tribulation, or affliction, whichever befell the church of Christ was under the papal Roman power. This power was symbolized by the “little horn” of *Daniel 7*, into whose hands the saints of the Most High were given for a thousand two hundred and three-score prophetic days—1260 years. This period commenced 538 AD, and ended when the civil power fell from the hands of the Papacy by the imprisonment and exile of Pius VI, in 1798.²²

The persecution began to wane under the German Reformation, and ended in the first half of the eighteenth century. To this the Saviour doubtless referred when He spoke of shortening the days of affliction for the elect’s sake. The affliction ceased before the expiration of the days spoken of by the prophet. And Mark says,

Mark 13

²⁴ In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened.

This was actually fulfilled, in that order. The days of the prophecy closed at the very close of the eighteenth century.

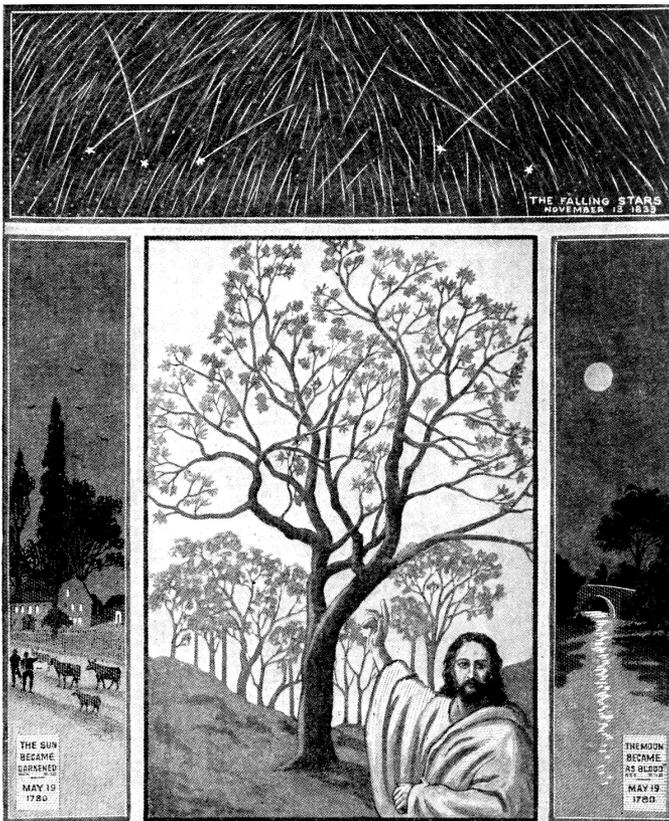
- The power was still in the hands of the Papacy, but unused;
- The affliction was passed;

²¹ *Journal of Commerce*, November 15, 1833.

²² For more evidence on this point see *Thoughts on the Revelation*, by Uriah Smith.

- The long, dark night of persecution upon the church of Christ had come to an end;
- There was a respite “for the elect’s sake,” lest no flesh should be saved—lest the faithful witnesses for Jesus should be exterminated by the power and malice of the Inquisition.

And in this time of respite, while yet the power lingered in the hands of the man of sin, the sun was “darkened”—God’s “signs in the heavens above” commenced their fulfillment. The darkening of the sun in 1780 was the greatest that ever was known, and it took place at the very time specified in the “sure word of prophecy.”²³



²³ 2 Peter 1:19.

13. All These Things

IT IS SUGGESTED that there are other things besides the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, which took place, according to this prophecy, and we are to look for “all these things” before we are to expect the coming of the Lord. If the reader will look carefully at the connection, he will see that following these signs, five things are mentioned before the parable of the fig-tree is given:

1. The shaking of the powers of the heavens;
2. The appearing of the sign of the Son of man;
3. The mourning of all the tribes of the earth;
4. The coming of the Son of man in power and great glory;
5. Sending His angels to gather His elect.

Surely no one will contend that “all *these* things” shall take place before we have a right to expect the coming of the Lord as an event near at hand. We cannot say His coming is yet near in the future when He *has come* and gathered His saints to himself in glory.

Thus it is seen that we have to draw a line between those things which are signs of His coming; and those things which take place *at His coming*. Where shall this line be drawn? We say between the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and the things which follow. All that follow the three signs are connected with the immediate coming of the Lord. We need notice only the first—the shaking of the powers of the heavens.

1. HEBREWS 12: VOICE OF GOD SHAKES THE EARTH

Paul teaches, in *Hebrews* 12, that as the voice of God once shook the earth, in the days of Moses, so once more will the voice of God shake both earth and heaven. *Once more* the voice of God from heaven will be heard, and heaven and earth will be shaken thereby.

2. REVELATION 6: HEAVENS DEPART; MIGHTY EARTHQUAKE

In *Revelation 6*, following the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, it is said,

Revelation 6

¹⁴ And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together...

This is accompanied with an earthquake so great that every mountain and island are moved out of their places. Thus the heavens and the earth are shaken, and the people upon the earth call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. They will understand at that time that the Lamb of God,—He who has been their intercessor,—has taken vengeance into His hands, and no probation remains for the impenitent.²⁴

3. REVELATION 16: VOICE OF GOD AND SEVENTH PLAGUE

In *Revelation 16:17-21* we learn that the voice of God is heard from heaven, and the consequent commotion of the elements takes place, under the seventh and last plague,

Revelation 15

¹ ...in which [the plagues] is filled up the wrath of God.

Under this plague the battle of the great day is fought. Heaven's artillery is the great hail-storm.²⁵ Under the sixth plague the Saviour announces His coming as future, but very near.

4. ISAIAH 2 & 13: PEOPLE FLEE TO THE ROCKS

Isaiah, in chapter 2 and also 13, prophesies of the same shaking, and the dismay of the inhabitants of the earth, who seek a hiding-place in the rocks for fear of the majesty of the Lord, locating it in “the day of the Lord.”

5. JEREMIAH 25: DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED

Jeremiah, in chapter 25, locates the speaking of God from heaven at the time of the great battle, when all the kingdoms of the earth shall drink of the cup of God's fury, and fall and rise no more; when...

²⁴ Compare *2 Thessalonians 1:7-10*.

²⁵ Compare *Ezekiel 13*.

Jeremiah 25

³² ...evil shall go forth from nation to nation,

–because the Lord has a controversy with them, and:

Jeremiah 25

³¹ ...He will give all the wicked to the sword.

The destruction of the wicked shall be so complete and universal that...

³³ ...they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

6. JOEL 3: THE HARVEST IS RIPE

Joel also speaks of the time when the voice of God is heard from heaven, and says it is when the battle of the nations is come, when the sickle is put in because the harvest is ripe.²⁶

7. MATTHEW 13: HARVEST IS THE END OF THE WORLD

Jesus said,

Matthew 13

³⁹ The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels;

–and also that at the harvest the Son of man shall send forth His angels to separate the wheat from the tares.²⁷

8. REVELATION 14: HARVEST LINKED TO JESUS ON THE WHITE CLOUD

John also says that the harvest is reaped when the Son of man appears upon the great white cloud.²⁸

9. REVELATION 14: PRECEDED BY A SOLEMN MESSAGE

A most solemn message of warning is given before the Son of man appears upon the white cloud to reap the harvest of the earth. The seven last plagues are poured out after this message, and before the advent.

²⁶ *Joel 3:9-16.*

²⁷ *Matthew 13:37-43.*

²⁸ *Revelation 14:14-18.*

10. PLAGUES AFTER MESSAGE AND BEFORE ADVENT

The plagues come after the message, for the first plague is poured out upon the very ones denounced in the message.²⁹ And the plagues come before the advent, for under the sixth plague the Lord warns of His coming near, and the great battle is fought under the seventh, which is just at the period of His coming.

11. THE WHITE CLOUD IS THE SIGN AT HIS COMING

Inasmuch as He comes in the glory of His Father, and all His holy angels come with Him, it is certain that there will be such glory and splendor as this world has never yet beheld. We believe the distant appearance of this cloud, of this most resplendent glory, far, far, beyond the brightness of the sun, will be that “sign of the Son of man” which will cause all the tribes of the earth to mourn. They will have heard and rejected the evidence of His near coming. Then, when too late, they will realize their terrible mistake and hopeless condition. This will cause them to seek a hiding-place from the dazzling, and to them fearful, sight.

We do not here take time to fully develop the argument concerning the shaking of the powers of the heavens. But from this brief view we think it must appear conclusive to all that the shaking of the powers of the heavens is not a sign to prove to the waiting church that the Lord’s coming draws near, but is an event which takes place in immediate connection with the Lord’s appearing.

It therefore follows that the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, are the only signs here given whereby we may feel the strongest assurance that His coming is near. And these *are* already fulfilled. Therefore *now* is the time to *watch*, for His coming is near indeed. We do not say there are no more prophecies to be fulfilled before the Lord comes. The warning of the angel of *Revelation* 14:9-12 must do its work,—must lead the people of God to that perfect obedience to...

²⁹ Compare *Revelation* 14:9-12 and 16:1-2.

Revelation 14

¹² ...the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus,

—to that preparation and consecration which will insure their being sealed with the seal of God in their foreheads, that they may be preserved from the evil to come, in the day of the Lord's anger,—in the pouring out of the plagues of His wrath.

Zephaniah 2

¹ Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

² Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you.

³ Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

The Son of man will be seen,

Matthew 24

³⁰ ...coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

But before His coming a great work must be done for His people. Should He suddenly burst upon them now, they could not endure the “power and great glory” of the scene. This subject is well illustrated by the following words of the prophet:

Hosea 6

³ Then shall, we know, if we follow on to know the Lord; His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

The morning is a beautiful figure of the opening glory of the day of God. The day-star first appears, then the dawn of day. And as the light of day increases, our eyes are enabled to endure it, and view the sun, shining in his strength. But should the light of the sun burst upon the world suddenly at midnight, no human eye could endure it.

So will the people of God be prepared to meet their coming King. They must first break away from the love and cares of this world, and consecrate all to the Lord. Then will they, in due time, share the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,

2 Peter 1

¹⁹ ...as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

The day-star will arise in their hearts:

2 Peter 1

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.

Those who have taken heed to the sure word of prophecy through the dark, watching night, then raise their heads in triumph. They are filled with faith and with the Holy Spirit. Glory is poured upon them till they can gaze on Christ and angels. The trumpet sounds, the angels hasten to the graves of the righteous dead, and the voice of the Son of God awakes the sleeping saints of all ages. They come forth in immortal perfection; and, as they leave the earth, the living saints are changed.

Matthew 24

³¹ The elect...from one end of heaven to the other,

—with angels bright and strong to lead the way, are caught up to meet the Lord, who waits in mid-heaven to receive the purchase of His blood. Language would fail to describe what follows; dear reader, we pray you to contemplate it, and may we be prepared to participate in this happy meeting.

14. Parable of the Fig-Tree

Matthew 24

³² Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh.

³³ So likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it [margin, "He"] is near, even at the doors.

THE parable of the fig-tree is probably the most forcible figure that could be used by our Lord to illustrate this subject. When the trees of the field begin to put forth their leaves, and the tender grass springs up, and the ground is being covered with its green velvet carpet, we know that summer is nigh. It is a certainty with us that summer is coming when we see these signs in nature.

We *know* that summer is nigh. "So, *likewise*," or with the same certainty, we may *know* that Christ's coming is at the doors when the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, are fulfilled.

Our Lord has stated the object of these signs, which is that we may know when His coming is at the doors. But we are told by some that the church is not to know anything of the period of Christ's second advent. Then we inquire,

"Why did our Lord give signs of the event?"

"Are they given to deceive us, to lead the honest Christian to look for Christ's coming when, in fact, nothing is to be known of the time of the event?"

Certainly not. The fact that Christ foretells signs of His coming, and then states the object of those signs, that the church may *know* when the event is near, even at the doors, is sufficient proof that it is the will of Heaven that the church should understand the period of the second advent. Our Lord says,

Luke 21

²⁸ And when these things *begin* to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh.

The signs began to come to pass with the dark day of 1780. Then it could be said that “redemption draws nigh”, and from that time the humble follower of Jesus might look up in expectation of witnessing His glorious appearing.

Luke 21

³¹ So likewise, when you see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

The signs in the sun, moon, and stars are all that were given to base faith upon. All the other events mentioned in connection with these, have their fulfillment after the faith of God’s people is perfected, and the doom of all sinners is fixed; therefore they cannot be embraced in the phrase,

Matthew 24

³³ ...all these things.

The three signs having come to pass, we may now learn the parable of the fig-tree, and know that Christ’s coming is near, even at the doors.

The phrase, “all these things,” does not embrace the mourning of the tribes of the earth, and the sign of the Son of man. Neither does it embrace the shaking of the powers of the heavens; for that does not take place until the seven last plagues are poured out. But the faith of God’s people is perfected, and the doom of all sinners is forever fixed, before the pouring out of the first plague.

The parable of the fig tree was given to inspire faith in the minds of those who hear the reasons of Christ’s soon coming. But it is most absurd to suppose that this parable is to be learned *after* it is said,

Revelation 22

¹¹ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still;...and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

No! The phrase, “all these things,” embraces the three great signs in the sun, moon, and stars, given to strengthen the faith of God’s people while merciful warnings are being given to the

world. Here, then, since the falling stars of 1833, the parable of the fig-tree has force, and we may know that Christ's coming is near, even at the doors, with all the certainty that we know that summer is nigh when the trees put forth their tender buds and leaves.

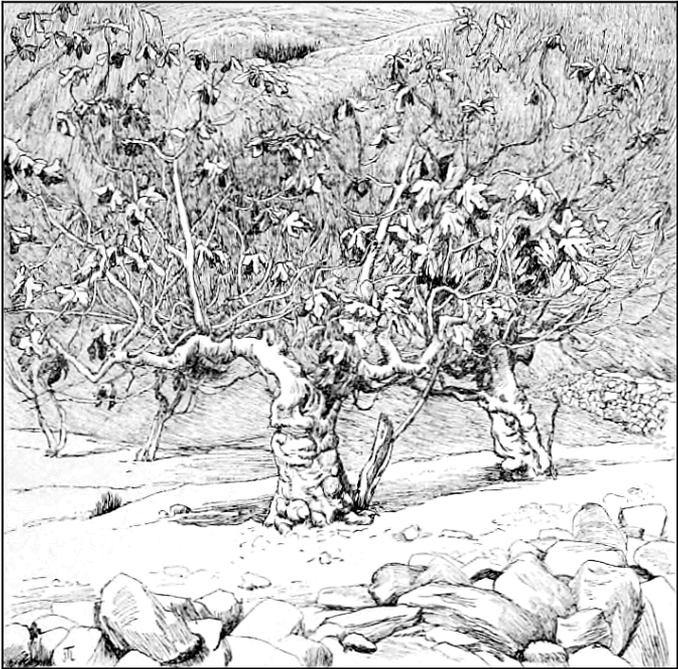


Fig Tree in the Valley of Hinnom
(The Life of Our Saviour v2, 1898)

15. This Generation Shall Not Pass

Matthew 24

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

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

MANY suppose that our Lord here speaks of the generation then living, who listened to His teachings. That such are in error on this point, the following facts clearly prove:

1. It is certainly true that what is embraced in the phrase, “all these things,” was not fulfilled in that generation.
2. It could not be the generation living in the days of His flesh, for He said to them,

Luke 11

²⁹ There shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Mark 8

¹² And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, Why does this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

It is evident that our Lord refers to the generation which would see the signs fulfilled, and would be instructed by the parable of the fig-tree. In this prophetic discourse, He leads the minds of His disciples down over the events of the Christian age, mentions the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and then declares that this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.

In like manner, Paul carries his brethren forward to the resurrection, when he says,

1 Corinthians 15

⁵¹ We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.

Or,

1 Thessalonians 4

²⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

The things here mentioned by the apostle did not take place in his day. They have not yet taken place. Notwithstanding, he speaks of them as though they would take place in his day, and as if he were to have a part in them.

Christ is given to the last generation. God sent Noah to the last generation before the flood, not to any preceding one. The very generation which was destroyed by the waters of the flood saw Noah build the ark, and heard his warning voice. So God has raised up men to give the solemn warning to the world at the right time to give force to the warning. And the very generation of men that live after the three great signs are fulfilled, and who hear and reject the warning message of Heaven, will drink the cup of the unmingled wrath of God. And those of this very generation who receive the message, suffer disappointments, and endure the trials of the waiting position, will witness the coming of Christ, and exclaim,

Isaiah 25

⁹ Lo, this is our God; we have *waited* for Him, and He will save us.

With what emphasis our Lord gave utterance to this sentiment! It is a rebuke upon our unbelief. As we read it, God help us to believe it:

Matthew 24

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

And as though this were not enough to lead us to unwavering faith, He adds these forcible words:

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

16. Of That Day and Hour Knows No Man

Matthew 24

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

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

THE day and the hour, and even the year, of the second advent are purposely hidden. Some of the prophetic periods reach to “the time of the end,” while others extend still further down, very near the end itself; yet none of them reach to the coming of the Son of man.

Many seem to suppose that the text proves that nothing may be known concerning the time of the second advent. But in this they greatly err, as has been abundantly shown in this chapter. The reader will call to mind the following points:

1. The disciples inquired of the Saviour in regard to *the sign of His coming*. Let it be remembered that His answer embraced this as a matter which He would have His people understand.
2. He gave a brief sketch of events covering the whole dispensation, by means of which the people of God might know something of their position all the way down to the end.
3. In direct answer to their question He gave *three signs*, namely, in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars, so great, and fulfilled in such a manner, that they can neither be counterfeited nor mistaken.
4. It is right for us to regard the information that He gave as He himself regarded it. That He considered it a complete and sufficient answer to their question is proved in that He said,

Matthew 24

³³ When you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

And He considered it clear enough to be the basis of a duty, for it is given in His words in the form of a commandment, “know that it is near.” In the original it is in the imperative form; it is necessary to our safety that we know, and He requires us to know.

Reference is often made to this verse with as much confidence as if it were a sufficient refutation of every argument in favor of the truth that Christ’s coming is near. We accept the declaration of this verse; we accept all the Scriptures. May we ask the objector,

“Do you believe this scripture?”

Perhaps he will say,

“Yes; I believe that no man can tell the day nor the hour of His coming.”

We also believe that; but that is not all that the Saviour said. *Do you believe His word?* Do you believe that you may know, by the signs which He has given, when His coming is near, even at the door? Here is the test of your confidence in the teachings of our blessed Lord. We have this confidence; we fully believe we may know. Nay, more; we believe we *must* know,—that we are *commanded to know*, and not to slight the Saviour’s warnings. And we believe it to be just as fatal for us not to know as it was for the inhabitants of the earth in the days of Noah not to know when the flood was coming.

Matthew 24

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

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

³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

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

It is quite possible to know that an event is near without knowing the day and hour when it will occur. Plain as this distinction is, the objectors seem to overlook it altogether. An illustration of this is afforded in an incident which occurred a few years ago. We were holding meetings in the northern part of Ohio; it was in the spring of the year. Having one evening presented the Bible evidences that the coming of the Lord is near, we were hailed next morning by a gentleman who was planting his garden, and requested to tell him *at what time* we thought the Lord would come. Of course we told him we knew nothing about that; we left it where the Scriptures leave it, that it is near, *but just how near* we have no knowledge.

But he insisted that, inasmuch as we were very confident that His coming is near, we must have formed *some idea of the definite time*, and he would not be satisfied unless we told him. So it often is that the idea of definite time is firmly fixed in the minds of opposers, while it never is in ours. Failing to satisfy him by denials, we changed the conversation to his work. He was planting corn. We asked him if he expected that the corn would soon “come up”? He answered,

“Yes.”

“And why?”

“There is good reason to expect it. The season is well advanced; the ground is moist and warm.”

“Then you feel assured, even to a certainty, that it will come up soon?”

Again the answer was,

“Yes.”

Then we continued:

“As you are certain that it will come up soon, please tell us *at what exact time* you think it will come up!”

By pressing the point a little, he was led to confess that his request was not a reasonable one, that we may be certain that an event is near, and not know the exact time when it will occur.

And why not be equally positive in both cases? Our Saviour's parable is based upon the very facts which led this man to feel assured that his corn would come up soon. This parable is given in *Luke 21:30-31*, where it is said of the trees,

Luke 21

³⁰ When they now shoot forth, you see and *know of your own* selves that summer is nigh at hand.

That is, the evidence is so conclusive that you need no argument; you ask no farther proof when you see the signs which He has given, that His coming is nigh, "even at the doors."

³¹ So likewise, when you shall see all these things, *know that it is near*, even at the doors.

The only way imaginable in which this certainty can be evaded, is to say that the parable itself is based on certain facts which are yet matters of dispute, and therefore matters of uncertainty. But then the question arises,

"Would the Saviour build a parable of such certainty, and command us *to know* it as a certainty, and rest the whole fabric on uncertainties?"

Impossible! We insist that the signs are not uncertainties. They are made uncertain only by a mystifying process which leaves everything in doubt and obscurity to which it is applied. By the working of this process we have no "*sure* word of prophecy" left to us. But by taking the statements of our Saviour as *literal truths*, we have harmony in statement and certainty in fulfillment.

17. This Generation

Matthew 24

³⁴ This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

DIFFERENT views are taken of the Saviour's words in this verse. One is, that the generation means *the race*, or Jewish people. This we consider a forced construction. It seems to be as unnecessary as it is unnatural. And it leaves everything indefinite where every declaration of the context tends to definiteness. It adds nothing whatever to the force of the general statement of the chapter.

Another is, that the individuals then present, or the generation living at that time, would continue till all these things were fulfilled. This has far more appearance of plausibility than the other theory. It might well be considered the truth were there no opposing considerations. But opposing considerations exist, which are not only weighty, but, we think, insurmountable.

This view is not *necessary*, because another and more reasonable one can be presented. The facts and reasons which we have set forth do tender our conclusion necessary, namely, that the chapter speaks of a personal, literal coming of the Saviour, which has not yet taken place. We have no idea that these facts will ever be met, and these reasonings refuted.

Another view, which we hold to be the true one, is that the language is prophetic, and uses the present for the future, as is common in the prophecies. *Isaiah 9* speaks of the birth of the Messiah as already having taken place, and chapter 53 in like manner speaks of His sufferings and death as being then in the *past*, more than half a millennium before He appeared on earth. If these prophecies were treated as Universalists and others of late years treat *Matthew 24*, the evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus would be entirely destroyed. Yet *Matthew 24* is as certainly a prophecy as *Isaiah 9* and 53.

Compare the language of our Saviour with that of Paul, who, in speaking to the Corinthian church, said,

1 Corinthians 15

⁵¹ We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

—or translated, at the sound of the last trump. The pronoun “we” naturally refers to the speaker and those to whom he speaks. But the trumpet has not yet sounded, the resurrection has not yet come, the translation of the living righteous to immortality without their seeing death has not yet taken place, and Paul and the church of Corinth have all fallen asleep. But *Paul’s brethren have not*. Paul was speaking by prophecy as surely as was *Isaiah* in chapter 9, when he said,

Isaiah 9

⁶ Unto, *us* a Son *is* given.

When Isaiah uses language which refers so directly and unmistakably to those then living, as taken according to the natural application of the terms, why do all so readily apply it to a generation centuries then in the future? It is only because *the facts* compel us to recognize this usage in the prophecies. So the words of Paul can refer only to the last age of the church, to those of his brethren who shall be living when Christ comes, who shall be saved from death, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

And so also in *1 Thessalonians* 4. Here he says:

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁵ We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep.

He explains what he means by those who are *asleep*, for he says,

¹⁶ ...the *dead* in Christ shall rise.

Universalists uniformly refer the resurrection to a *moral change*, to a rising or passing from moral or spiritual death. But to

Speak of those who are morally *or spiritually dead in Christ* is to use language very strange and inappropriate. The Scriptures plainly teach that they who have fallen asleep in faith, who have died in Christ, shall have part in the first resurrection, which will take place when Christ comes.

Of Paul and his brethren in Thessalonica we can say, as we said of those in Corinth:

- They are not alive, they do not remain;
- The day of the Lord has not yet come, for the “day of salvation” still continues;
- The voice of the archangel has not been heard;
- The saints have not risen from the dead, and the living saints have not been caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and
- Worldlings and worldly-minded professors still cry, “Peace and safety.”

As Paul spoke here also by the spirit of prophecy, to *some of his brethren* all these words will be fulfilled; not one word will fail.

And so of the words of the Saviour. Having carried the minds of the disciples forward to the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, He said,

Matthew 24

³³ When you shall see all *these things*, know that it is near, even at the doors.

Will anyone pretend that *these things* there referred to were *then present*? By no means. But do not *these things* refer to things in the presence of the speaker? Not necessarily. But “this generation” and “these things” belong together, for “this generation” shall see “these things” (see verse 34), though all were then in the future. And when these things are fulfilled, this generation to which these things are present facts, will not pass till *all* be fulfilled, even to the coming of the Son of man.

It is a solemn to contemplate, yet we firmly believe it is truth, the signs have been fulfilled, and that the generation which saw the wonderful shower of falling stars in 1833, the last of the signs, will not pass away till the Lord himself shall descend from heaven.³⁰

On the term “this generation,” we might have noticed the parallels to this in the Scriptures, to justify our conclusion. We will yet notice one, and use the language of E. B. Elliott, A.M.:

Our Lord might mean by “*this* generation” the generation of the time He was then speaking of, just as in *Luke 17:34*, where, speaking of the time of the second coming, He says, “On *this* night shall two be in one bed; one shall be taken,” etc., meaning thereby the night of His coming, and so rendered in our English version “in *that* night.”

The Harmony in Revelation

There is the most perfect harmony between the teachings of the book of *Revelation* and the view we have presented of *Matthew 24*. We refer especially to the seals of chapters 5 to 8. In the first eleven chapters of *Revelation* there are three series of seven, which cover the entire gospel dispensation.

³⁰ PP Editor’s Note: See the Appendix, “This Generation Shall Not Pass.” Jones is obviously incorrect in his interpretation here, as it has been almost 200 years since 1833. Other Adventists of his time held a similar view including James White, Uriah Smith, and E. J. Waggoner. Some of the Millerites had a better interpretation. Charles Fitch presents this view in his *Letter to Rev. J. Litch - Remarks on the Twenty Fourth of Matthew* (William Miller also understood it the same way):

The only question is, what did Christ mean by generation? Plainly, not the men then living, for it cannot be shown that an individual of that, or any other generation of that sort, to this day, has seen Christ in the clouds of heaven. It is said of Christ in *Psalms 22:30*, “a seed shall serve Him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.” This, then, is the meaning of the text: “The generation of my spiritual seed shall not pass away from the earth, till all these things be fulfilled.” Generation is used with like import in *Psalms 24:7*, *Psalms 112:2*, *1 Peter 2:9*.

Chapters 2 and 3 contain the letters to the churches. These embrace a history of the church of God from the first century to the coming of the Son of man to gather His people into His kingdom.

The seven trumpets of chapters 8 to 11 cover about the same period of time but give a history of the nations of the earth in their conflicts with one another.

The seven seals of chapters 5 to 8 are intermediate between the other series; giving a history of neither the church nor the nations separately, but a history of the church in its experiences and conflicts with the wicked nations of the earth.

All these end together at the judgment, or the introduction of the day of wrath, unless it be that the last trumpet, the third woe, may be considered to prevail upon the earth after the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That they all reach the coming day of reward and retribution there can be no reasonable question.

In *Revelation* chapter 6, the signs in the sun, moon, and stars are placed under the sixth seal, which reaches to the end of time, as the seventh seal barely announces a single fact connected with the ushering in of the advent of the Lord.

The harmony of this with our location of the signs in *Matthew* 24, is at once apparent. In *Revelation* 6, after the darkening of the sun and moon and the failing of the stars, the record says the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and the nations of the earth vainly endeavored to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb, for the day of His wrath has come.

In *Matthew* 24, exactly the same facts and the same order are given. The sun and moon are darkened, the stars fall, and the powers of heaven are shaken, and then the tribes of the earth mourn, because they see not only the sign of the Son of man in heaven, but they see the Son of man himself coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. They mourn because, as John says,

Revelation 6

¹⁷ The great day of His wrath is come.

Paul also says that He shall come to take...

2 Thessalonians 1

⁸ ...vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.

But the Lamb does not take vengeance in His hands until His advocacy and intercession for sinners cease. At the time spoken of by these prophecies, His intercession for sinners will have ceased, for “the great day of His wrath” will have come. Not one of them will call for mercy, nor will then be made to realize that their probation is ended, and the time for the offer of mercy to them is past. They then only seek to be hid from His terrible presence.

And in *Revelation* 14, after the warning of the third angel is given, the Son of man appears, and the harvest of the earth is reaped, and the wicked gathered as tares to be burned,³¹ or as the clusters of “the vine of the earth,” to be cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God. Can anyone say this is in the past, and yet profess to maintain respect for the Bible as a revelation?

The Witness of the Lord's Supper

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper, a commemorative institution of the gospel, is a witness to the doctrine of the future coming of the Lord. In “the great commission,” Jesus told His disciples that He would be with them in the preaching of the gospel, and the practice of its ordinances, until the end of the *world*, or age,—the gospel age. But Paul says that in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, we do show forth the Lord's death *till He come*. When the Lord instituted the supper, He pointed their minds forward to His coming and kingdom, and said He would not thenceforth drink of the fruit of the vine till He drank it new with them in His kingdom.

³¹ *Matthew* 13.

If Christ came at the destruction of Jerusalem, it is remarkable that, of all the apostles and servants of God, no one has yet found out that the ordinances of the gospel have been obsolete since the year 70 AD! And if that be so the commission of the gospel, the authorized preaching of the gospel to every creature, also expired in 70 AD. And thus by logical sequence we have the blessings as well as the curses, the promises and the threatenings, all confined to *that generation* which lived in the time of the Saviour! Some may be willing to risk this conclusion in order to save their premises, but we shall take no part with them. To us the coming of the Lord is still...

Titus 2

¹³ ...that blessed hope;

–to meet our friends in the resurrection still comforts our hearts while we sorrow for them that sleep in Jesus. And still we pray,

Revelation 22

²⁰ Come, Lord Jesus.

The Working of False Miracles

A striking point of similarity between *Matthew 24* and those parts of the book of *Revelation* which refer to the closing scenes of this dispensation, is that which refers to the working of miracles to deceive. These are the words of the Saviour:

Matthew 24

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

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

In *Revelation 13:11-17* is a prophecy of these wonders, wrought by a certain power called the beast, with two horns like a lamb, by means of which he deceives the world, and fastens upon the people a system of false worship. Against this work of deception

and falsehood, God causes a warning to be proclaimed, which is found in *Revelation* 14:9-12, and this warning is given just before the Son of man appears to reap the harvest of the earth, which takes place at the end of this dispensation.³²

These miracles are again shown at the very conclusion of their work, in *Revelation* 16:12-14. Here also is shown the object of the deception which is wrought by...

Revelation 16

¹⁴ ...the spirits of devils, working miracles:

–it is to gather the kings and the people of the earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. And at this point of time the Saviour says,

¹⁵ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches.

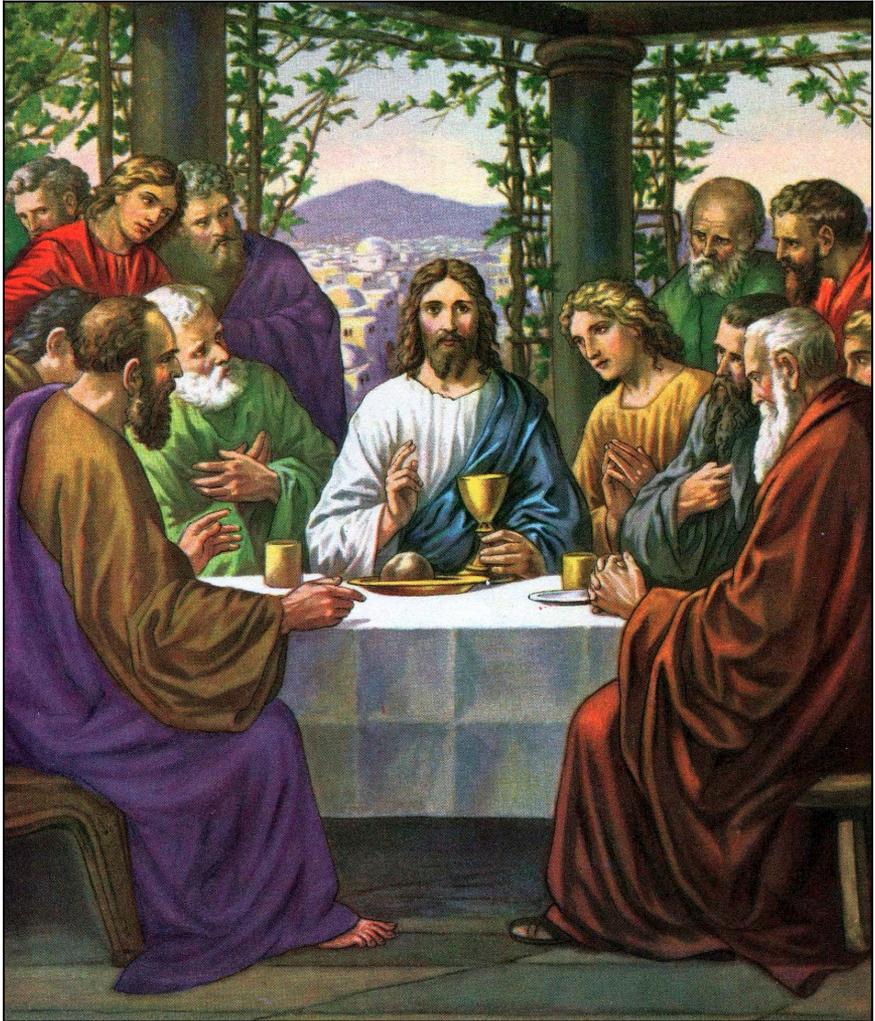
The “great day of God” mentioned in this text is that “day of the Lord,” “day of His wrath,” or “day of the Lord’s anger,” so often spoken of in the Scriptures, and which immediately succeeds “the day of salvation.” By comparing the texts to which reference has been made, it evidently appears that *Matthew* 24 refers to the same period of time that is referred to in *Revelation* 13, 14, 16; *Matthew* 13:38-39, and *Joel* 3:9-15.

- The deceptions are put forth; and
- The world is deceived;
- The Son of man appears;
- The harvest is reaped;
- The battle is fought; and
- The enemies of God are overthrown.

We believe all that our Lord has said. We accept His word that of that day and hour no man knows, and we just as readily accept His assurance that we may know when it is near. Nay, we acknowledge that it is our duty to know and to prepare for that day.

³² See *Matthew* 13:38-39 and *Joel* 3:9-15.

To enforce this duty our Lord gave a most forcible illustration from the Scriptures: Noah's time and ours.



The Lord's Supper proclaims Christ's Second Advent
(Vintage Bible Illustrations)

18. Noah's Time and Ours

Matthew 24

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

³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

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

A PICTURE of the present condition of the mass of mankind is here, drawn. The people of the last generation will be like that before the flood, while the ark was preparing.

This shows that *we cannot innocently be ignorant on the subject of the Lord's soon coming*. It will be a terrible calamity in that day to those who do not know, even as it was to the world in the days of Noah, because they did not know of the approaching time of the flood. If they had had no means of knowing, they would, of course, have been innocent, and have escaped destruction.

But they might have known, for Noah warned them by his preaching, and yet more forcibly in building the ark. In this he...

Hebrews 11

⁷ ...condemned the world.

He proved his faith by his works. They proved their unbelief, and were justly condemned. They turned away from his warnings, and forgot his words, and so the flood came when they did not expect it,—they did not know,—and took them all away. *So will it be when the Son of man is revealed.*³³

Noah preached and warned the people of the coming flood, and they mocked. He built the ark and they scoffed. He was a preacher of righteousness. His works were calculated to give point to, and set home to the heart, what he preached. Every righteous sermon, and every blow struck in building the ark, con-

³³ *Matthew 24:39.*

demned a careless, scoffing world. As the time grew nearer, they grew more careless, more hardened, more bold and impudent, and their condemnation surer. Noah and his family were alone. And could one family know more than all the world? The ark was a matter of ridicule, and Noah was regarded as a willful bigot.

But the Lord calls Noah into the ark, and says to him,

Genesis 7

⁴ Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth;

—and by the hand of Providence the beasts are led into the ark, and the Lord shuts Noah in. This is regarded at first by the scoffing multitude as something wonderful; but it is soon explained away by the wiser ones, so as to calm their fears, and they breathe easier. But the day arrives. The sun rises as usual, and the heavens are clear.

“Now where is old Noah’s flood?”

This is heard-from a thousand impious lips. On this very day some are being joined in marriage. It is a day of unusual feasting and sports. The farmer is planting and sowing, and the mechanic is heard pursuing his work of building. And while all are looking over long years of future prosperity and happiness, suddenly the heavens gather blackness. Fear fills every heart. They think of Noah, and as they turn to look toward the ark, the windows of heaven open, and the rain descends in torrents.

Genesis 7

¹¹ The fountains of the great deep are broken up,

—and here and there come gushing up rivers of water. The valleys are fast filling, and thousands are swept away in death. Some flee to the highest point of land, but the waters fast follow them. Men bear their wives and children to the mountains, but are obliged to leave them there to drown, while they climb the highest trees. But soon they too are covered with water. Not a scoffer remains. All are still in death. Horrible death! made still more

horrible by being the consequence of slighted mercy! But where is Noah? Ah! safe in the ark, borne upon the billows. Safe from the flood, safe, for God...

Genesis 7

¹⁶ ...shut him in.



Noah warning of the Flood
(Armageddon and the Kingdom of Peace, 1916)

19. Object of Matthew 24

Matthew 24

³² Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh:

³³ So likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

³⁶ But of that day and hour knows no man...

Knowing the Time

NOW we have a most important consideration to present to the minds of the readers. We think we have given facts and reasonings to prove that the coming of the Lord, mentioned in *Matthew 24*, is a literal, personal, visible coming. We have no idea that these facts can be controverted, or that these reasonings can be refuted. But if the question be asked of us,

“Do you, then, believe that the instruction of this chapter was given to prove that the second coming of Christ will be literal and personal, even as His first was?”

We answer, No, we do not. No such object was in view; no question concerning the nature of His coming was asked. Mark well this point. The disciples did not ask Him,

“Master, will you actually come to this world again, that we may behold you personally as we see you now?”

No, no; this was not yet a matter of query. The Universalist, or spiritualizing, view of the second coming was not yet invented. Nor did the Saviour say,

“When you see these things, then you may know that my coming is personal and visible.”

The question was,

Matthew 24

³ What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

It was a question concerning a certain event, and the time of its fulfillment; and the answer was to this question, and to no other. And to this it was direct:

³³ When you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

Thus is shown the great mistake made by a majority of those who study this chapter. They appear to think that the sole object of the Saviour was to guard His followers against the idea that they can know anything about the time of His coming. But, to the contrary, He leads our minds down through a series of events and signs with the special object that we may know the time, not, indeed, the day nor the hour, but the time when it is near,—very near, even at the doors.

Verse 36 is often perverted when it is used to justify the oft-repeated assertion that:

“We cannot tell anything about the time of the Lord’s coming.”

When our opposers quote this verse, we accept its statement fully and cheerfully. They seem to have exceeding strong confidence in our Saviour’s words, that we cannot tell the day nor the hour. We have equal confidence in this declaration. But will they accept, with the same confidence, the statement in verse 33, which gives assurance that *we may know when it is near?*

Matthew 24

³³ So likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

If they accept this as they do verse 36, then the controversy of this chapter is ended. If they do not accept it, but still insist that we cannot know, then *how* can they consistently claim to be believers of the Saviour’s words? We invite all readers to look candidly at this point, and answer to their own hearts before God this question:

“For what was the instruction of this chapter given?”

If the Lord did not intend that His people shall know anything about the time, what is the meaning of the words in verse 33? He says that we may know when His coming is near, and we have too much reverence for, and fear of, His word to contradict Him. And more than this, we believe that verse 33 is not merely *instructive* but also *preceptive*. It contains not only a statement, but a commandment. It does not barely inform us that we may know, but it commands us to know.

The original shows, but the English does not plainly show, that the Saviour spoke in the imperative; and therefore no one can justly claim exemption, and say it makes no difference whether we know or do not. To say that we cannot know is to slight the words of the Lord. To refuse to diligently and prayerfully search in order to know, is to disobey the Lord's commandment. Reverence, humility, and a spirit of obedience, all call for a careful examination of our Saviour's teachings, and a reception of the evidence of His near coming.

By many, the evidences of the soon coming of Christ are considered insufficient to base faith upon. But mark: the testimony and acts of one man condemned the people destroyed by the flood. The evidences then were sufficient, otherwise the world would not have been condemned.

Prophetic Evidences

But behold the evidences which come pouring in upon us on all sides that the day of the Lord is near, and hastes greatly. We follow down the numerous prophetic chains of *Daniel*, and of the *Revelation*, and we find ourselves in every instance standing just before the day of wrath.

We see the signs spoken of by prophets, by Christ, and in the Epistles, fulfilling or fulfilled. And at the right time, and in the right manner, to fulfill certain prophecies, a solemn message arises in different parts of the world:

Joel 2

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord comes, for it is nigh at hand.

Wherever we look, we see prophecy fulfilling. And while the knowledge of God and the spirit of holiness are departing, spiritual wickedness like a flood covers the land.

But these evidences are considered insufficient to rest faith upon. Well, what kind of evidence is required? Says the skeptic:

“When the signs of the end are fulfilled, they will be so plain that no one can doubt.”

But if the signs are of such a nature, and are fulfilled in such a manner, as to compel all to believe in the coming of Christ, how can it be as it was in the days of Noah? Men were not then compelled to believe. But eight believing souls were saved, while all the world beside sunk in their unbelief beneath the waters of the flood. God has never revealed His truth to man in a manner to compel him to believe. Those who have wished to doubt His word, have found a wide field in which to doubt, and a broad road to perdition. Only those who wish to believe find solid rock on which to rest their faith.

Luke 18

⁸ When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

He will find but little. It will be as in the days of Noah. A few will believe, and stand complete in God amid all the perils of the last days.

Luke 12

³² Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Just before the end, the world will be hardened in sin, indifferent to the claims of God, careless about heeding warnings of danger, blinded by cares, pleasures, and riches; an unbelieving and infidel race, eating, drinking, marrying, building, planting, sowing.

- It is right to eat and drink, but the sin is in excess and gluttony.
- The marriage covenant is holy, but God's glory is seldom thought of.
- Building, planting, and sowing, necessary for convenient shelter, food, and doing, are right, but the world has gone wholly after these things, so that they have no time nor disposition to think of God, heaven, Christ's coming, and the judgment.

This world is their god, and all their energies of body and mind bow down to serve it. And the evil day is put far away. The faithful watchman who sounds the alarm as he sees destruction coming, is considered a "fanatic," a "teacher of dangerous heresies;" while a long period of peace and prosperity is predicted from the popular pulpit. So the churches are quieted to sleep. The scoffer continues to scoff, and the mocker mocks on.

The Close of Probation

But their day is coming. Thus says the prophet of God:

Isaiah 13

⁶ Howl; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

⁷ Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt;

⁸ And they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travails; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.

⁹ Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Most dreadful day! And is it near, and hastening on as fast as the rapid wheels of time can bring it? Yes, it hastes! It hastes greatly! What a description given by the prophet! Read it, and as you read, try to feel how dreadful will be that day.

Zephaniah 1

¹⁴ The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hastes greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

¹⁵ That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

¹⁶ A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

¹⁷ And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy; for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Now we hear the cry from the pulpit, and all the way along down to the grog-shop,

“Where is the promise of His coming?”

But the scene will speedily change:

1 Thessalonians 5

³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them....and they shall not escape.

The scoffing of the haughty scoffer will soon be turned to wailing and howling.

Isaiah 2

¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

¹² For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.

Jeremiah 25

³³ And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; they shall not be

lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

The last plagues, in which is filled up the wrath of God, waiting for mercy to finish her last pleadings; will be poured out.³⁴ Unmingled wrath of Jehovah! And not one drop of mercy? Not one! Jesus will lay off His priestly attire, leave the mercy-seat, and put on the garments of vengeance, never more to offer His blood to cleanse the sinner from his sins. The angels will wipe away the last tear shed over sinners, while the mandate resounds through all heaven, Let them alone!

The groaning, weeping, praying, preaching church on earth, who in the last message use every means within their reach, and employ every power of their being, to sound everywhere the loud cry, lest the blood of souls be found on their garments, are now hushed in solemn silence. The Holy Spirit has written within them these prophetic words of their soon-expected Lord:

Revelation 22

¹¹ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

- Now the ministers of truth have a message for the people, and gladly speak the words of life; but then they will have no message.
- Now their prayers and strong cries go up to Heaven in behalf of sinners; then they will have no spirit of prayer for them.
- Now the church says to the sinner, Come; and Jesus stands ready to plead His blood in his behalf, that he may be washed from sin and live; but then salvation's hour will have passed, and the sinner will be shut up in darkness and black despair.

³⁴ See *Revelation* 15:1, and 16 entire.

It will be a day of mourning and lamentation, and famine for hearing the words *of* the Lord.

Amos 8

¹⁰ I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

¹¹ Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

¹² And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

James 5

¹ Go to now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten.

³ Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days.

Now silver and gold may be used to God's glory, for the advancement of His cause, but in that day,

Ezekiel 7

¹⁹ They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels; because it is the stumbling-block of their iniquity.

Now they may lay up a treasure in heaven, in bags that wax not old. Now they may deposit in the bank of heaven, and deliver their souls. Then, overwhelmed with terror, they will cast their wealth into the mire of the streets; but...

¹⁹ ...their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord.

20. Our Duty to Watch

Matthew 24

⁴² Watch therefore; for you know not what hour your Lord does come.

⁴³ But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

⁴⁴ Therefore be also ready; for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes.

THEY who hide themselves behind the saying that the day will come as a thief, and that therefore they cannot know, will find when it comes that they have only insured their own destruction by willfully placing themselves beside those who did not know that the flood was coming, because they refused to heed the counsel God sent by the mouth of His prophets.

They were destroyed because they knew not; and they knew not because they would not heed the warning. And is the word of the Son of God of less consequence than that of Noah? By no means. If they were destroyed who refused the testimony of Noah, how shall they escape who shut their eyes and ears against the words of warning given by the Lord Jesus?

Oh, that men would be wise, and listen to the Saviour's counsel to watch, to observe the signs, and to know when the day is near, that they might not be taken away in the Lord's anger!

Hebrews 9

²⁸ Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

But none would look for Him—none would be watching and waiting for Him—if they could have no knowledge that He was near to come.

Joel 2

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord comes, for it is nigh at hand;

But none would sound an alarm, and call upon the inhabitants of the earth to tremble because the day of the Lord is near, if they had no evidence from the words of prophecy that it is near.

We are thankful that our heavenly Father, in the greatness of His mercy, has given us signs, and warnings, and such strong assurances, that we may know when the day is near, so that it shall not come as a thief upon the believing soul; thankful that we are thus afforded the means of escaping from the ruin that is impending, and of sharing in the triumph of the redeemed followers of the Lamb.

The present watching, waiting position requires much faith and patience. Says Paul:

Hebrews 10

³⁵ Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.

³⁶ For you have need of patience, that you have done the will of God [in proclaiming the coming of Christ], you might receive the promise.

³⁷ For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith; that if any man, draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

³⁹ But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Says James:

James 5

⁷ Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

⁸ Be you also patient; establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

The present position and present duty of God's people are defined:

Revelation 14

¹² Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.



A Watchman on the Walls of Zion
(Heralds of the Morning, 1906)

21. The Faithful and Wise Servant

Matthew 24

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

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom the Lord when He comes shall find so doing.

⁴⁷ Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods.

Marks of the Wise Servant

IN THIS FIGURE, Christ is represented as the Lord of the household of faith,³⁵ leaving His house, and committing to His servants the work of caring for His church:

- They are to feed the flock of God, over whom the Holy Ghost has made overseers³⁶.
- They must preach the Word³⁷.
- They should watch for souls as they that must give account³⁸.
- They will not only give meat to the household, but they will give it in due season.
- They will preach the *present* truth. Their last work before the return of their Master will be to proclaim His coming, and to teach the necessary preparation.
- They will sacrifice the society and blessings of home, and go everywhere, preaching the word, suffering fatigue of body and burden of spirit. But such will have great reward in the kingdom of God.

Who is that faithful and wise servant? Where shall we find him? It is he who is faithfully and wisely attending to the interests of the household of faith.

³⁵ See *Mark* 13:34; *Hebrews* 3:6.

³⁶ *Acts* 20:28.

³⁷ *2 Timothy* 4:2.

³⁸ *Hebrews* 13:17.

Matthew 24

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He comes shall find so doing.

He is Faithful

As a faithful watchman, he will give timely warning when he sees the sword coming. His work just before the end is seen in the following scriptures.

Joel 2

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord comes, for it is nigh at hand.

Isaiah 58

¹ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves, teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

⁵ But watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry.

He is Wise

Proverbs 11

³⁰ ...he that wins souls is wise.

He will expose error, then hold forth the truth in its harmony and beauty, and thus win men to the truth. When it becomes his duty to reprove and rebuke, it will be at a proper time and place, and then with all...

2 Timothy 4

² ...long-suffering and doctrine.

He will:

2 Timothy 2

¹⁵ Study to show [himself] approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.



The Faithful and Wise Servant watching
(Our Day in the Light of Prophecy, 1918)

22. The Evil Servant

Matthew 24

⁴⁸ But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delays His coming;

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

⁵⁰ The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

⁵¹ And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Relationship to the Message

WHAT the evil servant says and does shows most clearly the position and work of the faithful and wise servant. The reason why the evil servant says,

“My Lord delays His coming,”

–is that the faithful servant is proclaiming the coming of his Lord. The evil servant smites the faithful servant, because he teaches the speedy coming of his Lord. The faithful servant, true to his commission to preach the “gospel of the kingdom” to a fallen church and a scoffing world, toils on, and the evil servant smites on.

One is laying up treasure in heaven³⁹, and is preparing to go home to his eternal reward, while the other is calling down upon his head the displeasure of the high and holy One, and is getting ready to receive the unmingled cup of the fury of the Lord.⁴⁰

The faithful servant is turning some to righteousness, to shine forever as stars in his crown of glory⁴¹, while the evil servant pursues his downward course and work of death, making the bitter cup of woe which awaits him still more bitter.

³⁹ *Matthew* 6:20.

⁴⁰ *Revelation* 14:10.

⁴¹ *Daniel* 12:3.

But the separating day is coming. The Lord will come, and cut asunder the evil servant, and appoint him his portion with the lost. In the general wailing and gnashing of teeth, with hypocrites he will receive the portion due him for his works.

That this application is correct is shown by the words of the Saviour in the closing part of this chapter. Both parties are professedly “servants” of God. The “evil servant” says,

Matthew 24

⁴⁸ *My Lord delays His coming.*

But when, because of his unfaithfulness, because of his refusal to heed the instructions and warnings of his Lord, and of his ill-treatment of his fellow-servant who is sounding the alarm, the Lord shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. It will avail him nothing that he has called the Lord *his Lord*; that he has been looked up to as a leader of the flock.

They have the duty laid upon them, as servants, to give meat in due season; to sound the alarm; to proclaim the message of the advent near, even at the doors. But they are “evil servants,” recreant to the trust committed to them, unmindful of the “sure word of prophecy.” They do not want to think, nor to have the people think, of the Lord’s coming.

Ease and Slumber

All scriptures which speak of that day call for watchfulness, diligence, and earnest zeal to be prepared to meet Him. But these are worldly-minded, selfish servants. They love their ease; they cry, “Peace and safety,” when sudden destruction is impending.

1 Thessalonians 5

¹ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you.

² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

They love to slumber; they say,

Isaiah 56

¹² ...tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

They join the idle throng in singing,

“There’s a good time coming.”⁴²

In the words of the Saviour, they...

Matthew 24

⁴⁹ ...eat and drink with the drunken,

2 Peter 3

³ ...walking after their own lusts.

The sociable, the festival, the fair, the supper for feasting—these have attractions for them which their selfishness cannot resist. By these piety is dethroned; zeal is extinguished; cross-bearing and self-denying become distasteful graces; to hunger and thirst after righteousness is a burden; the “form of godliness” is retained, but “the power thereof” is gone.⁴³

What a condition for a servant of God to be found in when his Master appears! And yet this is a fitting description of the mass of feasting professors who turn away with scorn from the unwelcome thought of the Lord’s near coming.

How different the lot of those who bear the cross, and give the household of faith meat due season!

Matthew 24

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He comes shall find so doing.

Matthew 13

⁴³ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

⁴² A popular poem by Charles Mackay, set to music by Henry Russell, and also Stephen Foster (1846).

⁴³ 2 *Timothy* 3:5.

Summary

We invite the attention of the reader to the following list of points made plain in our examination of this chapter:

1. The Saviour gave definite and plain signs which are to precede His coming.
2. He told the effect which these things would produce. See *Joel 2:1* and other prophecies.
3. He said that by these signs we might know when His coming is near, even at the doors.
4. And the language is stronger than that of permission or the expression of ability to know. It is imperative; we are commanded and required to know when it is near.
5. The signs are so easy to understand that we may know when it is near, just as we may know that summer is near when the trees put forth their leaves.
6. That we are commanded and required to know is confirmed by the illustration of the time of Noah.
 - Noah knew the time that the flood was near.
 - He preached its coming.
 - He prepared for the event.
 - It was fatal to all those who did not (would not) know the time. “So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” *Matthew 24:27, 37, 39*.
7. The Saviour says it will in like manner be a fatal error on the part of those who do not know when the Son of man is coming. But this could not be so:
 - if we could not know the time, or
 - if it makes no difference whether we know or do not.

All this teaches us that the doctrine of the Second Advent is a practical doctrine.

23. A Practical Doctrine

THE truth on this subject is important; it is important to us that we understand it. The oft-repeated saying that “it makes no difference,” is not applicable here.

But many evade the truth on this subject by referring to the good and pious of former generations, to whom the warning message of *Revelation* 14:9-12 was not given. They were accepted of God, and died happy; we will live as they lived, and go to heaven also. To this there are two just replies:

Professors of this day are not living as their fathers lived. Even one generation ago Christians professed a simplicity of godliness which is ignored by the mass of professors in this day. The church suppers and festivals, the gambling devices to obtain money, the church theatricals, and other profane amusements now foisted upon the name of Christianity “for pious uses” (to quote a term of the mother church), would not have been tolerated for a moment by our fathers of past generations.

The earnest vital godliness of a half century ago is now known to the few,—a “little flock”⁴⁴ when all told. Our fathers, in the denominations, will rise up to condemn this pleasure-loving age. The objection we are noticing is a reproach to the piety and zeal of our fathers, as their lives are a rebuke to the cold formality of present-day religion.

Let us in turn ask, Why was it that Seth, Enoch, and others before the day of Noah, were not required to build an ark? Enoch was so godly as to receive the testimony that his ways pleased God, and to be translated without seeing death. Could not Noah just live as Enoch lived and be saved, without the cross and labor of building an ark?

The answer is nigh unto everyone. He could not, and why? Because *Noah lived in the time of the flood and Enoch did not.* Enoch

⁴⁴ *Luke* 12:32.

could not preach Noah’s message; he lived at a time too early for that. Noah could not be accepted of God and do only that which Enoch did, as he lived under different circumstances. Extraordinary events require extraordinary preparations; and those preparations are suited to no other time but their own.

And so with the preaching of the Lord’s coming. To past generations it was not “present truth.” They could not give the message of warning. But we, who have seen the signs of His coming, who “knowing the time,”⁴⁵ who “see the day approaching,”⁴⁶ must proclaim this truth, and sound the alarm, as Noah proclaimed the approach of the flood.

As it was necessary in order to be saved to receive the message of Noah, so it is necessary in order to be prepared for our Lord’s advent that we accept the truth in regard to His near coming.



Our Forefathers lived up to all the Truth they were shown
(L. Noel after P.A. Labouchère, 1847 - Wellcome Collection)

⁴⁵ *Romans* 13:11-12.

⁴⁶ *Hebrews* 10:25.

24. The Faithful Rewarded at His Coming

IT WILL NOT be in vain that they look for Him, for He shall appear to their salvation.

Hebrews 9

²⁸ So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

It is not in vain that they love His appearing, for a crown righteousness is laid up for such.

2 Timothy 4

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

Their faithful waiting shall be rewarded, for when He appears they shall appear with Him in glory.

Colossians 3

⁴ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.

Their names may be cast out as evil, they may suffer reproach and scorn here, but when He comes they shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

1 Peter 5

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

Words cannot describe that glory. Finite man cannot fathom its greatness; for, truly,

1 Corinthians 2

⁹ Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

We cannot understand why any who take the Bible for their teacher, and profess to love the Lord Jesus, can have a prejudice against His second coming. He promised His followers that they should be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, which takes place at His coming, and will never take place unless He comes.

Luke 14

¹⁴ And you shall be blessed...for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Speaking of the signs of His coming He said:

Luke 21

²⁸ And when these things begin come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; your redemption draws nigh.

The saints, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, are groaning for the redemption of the body.

Romans 8

²³ ...ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

This is the redemption which will be accomplished at the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the just. The joy of that day is unspeakable. Says the Saviour:

Revelation 22

¹² Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.

Fervently our hearts respond,

²⁰ Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Lessons
from
Matthew 24

1. The End of the World

Signs of the Times, October 3, 1900

THE end of the world! How often it is spoken of in the Bible! How often it is spoken of by the people,—so often that the expression is almost a proverb! And how few people really believe in any such thing!

Indeed, if it were left for the people of the world to say whether there should be any end of the world, it is certain that there never would be any, because no generation of people would ever have the world end in their own day. Besides, if it were left for the people to say whether there should be any end of the world, there never would be any; because of themselves the people of the world never can certainly know of the beginning of the world; and how could they know of any end?

Knowledge of either the beginning or the end of the world is altogether a matter of revelation. Therefore it is that only...

Hebrews 11

³ Through faith we understand that the worlds were formed.

The worlds *were* formed, made, *created*. It was done by the word of God.

Psalm 55

⁶ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

⁹ For He spoke, and it was.

And so entirely were the worlds formed by *the word of God*,

Hebrews 11

³ ...that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

The world having been created, it is only from the Creator that the purpose and course of its existence can be known, and whether there shall be any end. The world having been produced by the word of God, it is only by the word of God that it can ever

be known that there shall be any end of the world. And when the word of God is spoken on that subject, as well as on any other, whatsoever in that word is said, that is final, and must be accepted, because that is the sole source of knowledge, and He is the sole authority qualified to speak on the subject.

What, then, says the Word as to the end of the world? Twice in the parable of the tares, Jesus used definitely the expression “the end of the world.”

Matthew 13

³⁸ The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

³⁹ The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

⁴⁰ As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

⁴¹ The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

⁴² And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

⁴³ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Again, in the parable of the net which was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, Jesus says:

⁴⁸ Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

⁴⁹ So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,

⁵⁰ And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Again, when Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel, He said,

Matthew 28

²⁰ Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Therefore, so certainly as Jesus has spoken, there is to be the end of the world. This is so certain because:

John 1

¹⁰ The world was made by Him,

—and because it is at His coming that the end of the world is to be. From the words already quoted it is evident that the end of the world comes in fire—in the judgment and destruction of wicked men. This is further shown in another place:

2 Peter 3

⁵ For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water;

⁶ Whereby [by the word of God] the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished;

⁷ But the heavens and the earth, *which are now*, by the *same word* are *kept in store*, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Thus by the word of God, which made the world, it is certain that the world will end; for,

¹⁰ The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

¹² The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

Revelation 6

¹⁴ The heavens shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places.

¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman will hide themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains,

¹⁶ And will cry to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Isaiah 2

²⁰ In the day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

²¹ To go into the clefts of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth.

¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

When Jesus spoke repeatedly of “the end of the world,” He uttered no new saying; for all the prophets had spoken of it, and He was only speaking of a thing the mention of which was familiar to all who were acquainted with the Scriptures. Besides this, it is His own coming that brings the end of the world; and all the prophets from...

Jude

¹⁴ Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these [two simultaneous things].

Enoch had said,

¹⁵ Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all;

—and all the other prophets had followed with the same announcement and warning, so that time and space would fail to recall the words of all.

That the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world are simultaneous events was so well understood by the disciples from the Scriptures, that when they asked Jesus concerning the end of the world, their question was,

Matthew 24

³ What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

The sign of either is the sign of the other; the same sign betokens both.

From the day that sin entered the world, it has been settled by God, and has been spoken to men in the Word of God, that there shall be an end to this world. For,

Acts 17

³¹ [God] has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.

The resurrection of Christ itself is assurance to all men that there shall be an end of the world. For the resurrection of Christ is assurance to all men that they shall all be judged; and it is assurance of this, in that His resurrection is the assurance of the resurrection of every man, from “the first man Adam” unto the last man that shall ever live on the earth. And the resurrection of the dead is at the second coming of the Lord; and the second coming of the Lord brings the end of the world.

1 Corinthians 15

²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

²³ But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.

²⁴ *Then comes the end.*

Seeing, then, that there is certainly to be “the end of the world,” and *such* an end,

2 Peter 3

¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved; what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

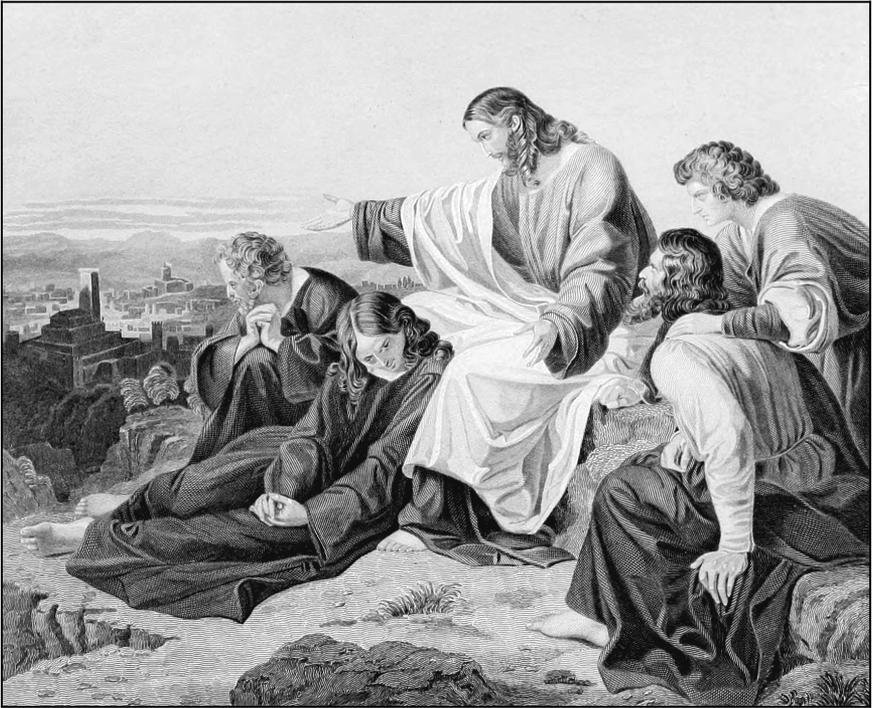
¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?

What, then, of the time? When shall these things be? What says the Creator and Preserver of the world as to the time when properly the end of the world shall be really looked for and expected? Next week we shall begin a series of six studies of the Lord's answer to the direct question as to the sign of His...

Matthew 24

³ ...coming, and *the end of the world.*

Who can there be who should not study the Lord's answer to that question?



Christ prophesying of the Destruction of the Temple
(Life of Jesus Christ for the Young, vol. 1, 1880)

2. Let No Man Deceive You

Signs of the Times, October 10, 1900

Matthew 24

¹ And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple.

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

³ And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

⁴ And Jesus answered.

HE ANSWERED fully. His answer covers all the time from that time until His coming and the end of the world. A number of important matters are touched, and others are quite fully considered. But the first of all things said in the Lord's answer to the question of His disciples, is,

⁴ *Take heed that no man deceive you.*

This, then, is the most important of all considerations in connection with the coming of the Lord and the end of the world. This thought is repeated and emphasized by Paul, when he writes of the same subject:

2 Thessalonians 2

¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him,

² That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

³ *Let no man deceive you by any means.*

To be deceived with respect to the coming of the Lord and the end of the world is the worst possible deception; for to be so deceived is to be unprepared for that wonderful and all-decisive event, and so is to be taken unawares, and to be destroyed.

1 Thessalonians 5

² For...the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them; and they shall not escape.

Luke 21

³⁵ For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

To be deceived into thinking that the Lord is *not* coming when He *is* coming, is to be unprepared, and so taken unawares and destroyed. To be deceived into thinking that He *is* coming when He is *not* coming, is only to be disappointed, and so by the deception and disappointment to be caused not to believe in His coming when He is really coming, and thus, also, to be not ready, and therefore to be taken unawares, and, as a consequence, destroyed. And just because to be thus deceived involves the most fatal of all consequences, Jesus begins His instruction on this all-important question with that which is the most important of all considerations:

Matthew 24

⁴ Take heed that no man deceive you.

Further, this is the most important of all instruction in connection with the subject, because in this very matter more effort is made to deceive than in any other. Jesus himself says:

⁵ For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And again,

¹¹ Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.

And yet again,

²⁴ There shall arise false christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

²⁵ Behold, I have told you before.

Having taken such precaution as this, and having shown such care to guard all against being deceived, it must needs be that He would make the whole matter so plain that all may escape deception. This, indeed, He has done. He has done it so thoroughly that any one who will believe His Word, can entirely escape all deception as to His coming, whether as to the personality, the time, or the manner of His coming.

First, as to the personality and manner of His coming. Note again His word:

Matthew 24

⁵ Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

It is therefore perfectly plain that any one who comes anywhere, at any time, or in any manner, saying, "I am Christ," is a deceiver; and no one is ever to believe any such representation. Again He says,

²⁵ If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

From this it is perfectly plain that whenever or wherever one person shall say to another,

"Christ is come here, or He has come there, come and see Him,"

—that person is a deceiver, and, if he believes it himself, is himself deceived. And no person in the world is ever to believe that any such thing as that is the coming of the Lord. Jesus further emphasizes this:

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

Surely, then, no one need ever be deceived in any of these ways as to the coming of the Lord; it is exceedingly easy to escape all deception in any of these ways. The way is made perfectly plain; the tests are all simple, and easily applied; and the word concern-

ing them is brief and easily remembered. All that any one needs to do is simply to believe this simple word of Jesus.

Yet He does not stop even here. He goes on and states the case so clearly as absolutely to preclude any possibility of deception as to His coming, on the part of anybody who will pay any attention whatever to His word. He not only tells, as in the words already quoted, that any person coming and saying,

“I am Christ,”

or saying,

“Lo, He is here, in the secret chamber,”

or,

“Lo, He is there, in the desert,”

—is a deceiver, but He tells why all such ideas are deception. And here is the reason:

Matthew 24

²⁷ For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

As stated in another place,

Luke 17

²⁴ For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day.

That is a reason so simple, so easily remembered, and yet so conclusive, it annihilates every possibility of deception as to His coming on the part of anybody who has any disposition whatever to believe the Word of Jesus as to His own coming again to the world. There is no possibility of any one counterfeiting His coming, and when that coming is in its brightness as the lightning that brilliantly lightens up the whole heavens and earth, there is neither chance nor need for one person to say to others,

“Lo, here He is, or there.”

It is even written,

Revelation 1

⁷ Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.

How, then, could it be possible to counterfeit it? and how can anybody be deceived with regard to it, who will but believe the Word?

A word farther as to the heavenly-shining brightness in which the Lord's coming is displayed; the cause of this is not in some particular display that is made to grace the occasion; it is simply the nature of His coming itself. For He himself comes in His own proper glory; He comes also in the glory of the Father, and with the holy angels. Now of Jesus himself in His glory it is written,

¹⁴ His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

¹⁵ And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace...

¹⁶ ...and His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.

Of the Father it is written that:

1 Timothy 6

¹⁶ [He] dwells in the light which no man can approach unto,

—a light so far above the brightness of the sun that in that day,

Isaiah 24

²³ ...the sun shall be ashamed,

—and the city of God has no need of the sun to shine in it, for the glory of God lightens it,

Revelation 21

²³ ...and the Lamb is the light thereof.

This is the glory of the Father and of Christ, in which Jesus appears at His second coming.

Yet even this is not all; the holy angels come with Him. And of but one of these it is written that:

Matthew 28

³ His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment was white as snow.

This of only one; and yet when Jesus comes, there come with Him of these...

Revelation 5

¹¹ ...ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands,

Hebrews 12

²² ...an innumerable company,

—such a mighty host that the heavens are so filled with them and their glory that the whole seems like vast billows of clouds. The whole heavens are perfectly “wrapped in a blaze of boundless glory.”⁴⁷ And such as this is the coming of the Lord. This, and this only, is the manner of His coming.

Yet more: the accompaniments of that coming:

Heavens Rolled Back

First, the tearing asunder of the heavens with a great noise, when the heaven departs as a scroll when it is rolled together.

2 Peter 3

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Revelation 6

¹⁴ And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

⁴⁷ Alexander Pope, Translation of Homer’s *Iliad*, Book XI.

The Voice

Secondly, uttered from the temple of heaven, from the throne, that voice that shakes both earth and heaven, so that they are completely broken up and removed.

Hebrews 12

²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

Revelation 16

¹⁷ And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

¹⁸ And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

¹⁹ And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

²⁰ And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Resurrection and Translation

Thirdly, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the righteous living:

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first;

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The coming of the Lord is all this, and not an iota less; yea, it is even much more. And in view of it all, or in view of only so much of it as we have been able here to set down, how is it possible for

anybody to be deceived as to His coming? It is not possible, except as people refuse to believe His Word.

Matthew 24

⁴ Take heed that no man deceive you.

2 Thessalonians 2

³ Let no man deceive you by any means.

And that is only to say in other words,

- Believe the Word,
- Receive the Word,
- Hold fast to the Word,

–as it is spoken by Jesus, and as it is in Jesus. So shall you be safe from all deception, and so shall you be saved.



3. As to the Time of His Coming

Signs of the Times, October 17, 1900

AFTER having given the counsel to guard His disciples against being deceived as to the personality and manner of His coming, Jesus next gives counsel to guard them from being deceived as to the *time* of His coming and of the end of the world. He not only says that:

Matthew 24

⁵ Many shall come saying, I am Christ,

–but that these same ones would say,

Luke 21 [RV]

⁸ *The time is at hand* [or “draws near” KJV].

But He says,

Luke 17 [Luke 21:8]

²³ Go not after them.

This was not to say nor to imply that no time could ever come when it would be proper for *anybody* to say, “The time is at hand,” or, “draws near.” It was only to say that no time could ever come when anybody could come, saying,

“I am Christ, and the time is at hand,”

–because, as has been abundantly shown, anybody who ever comes anywhere or at any time saying, “I am Christ,” is a deceiver. And this being false as to the personality and manner of His coming, it would, in the nature of things, be false as to the saying that:

“The time is at hand.”

Secondly, it was to say, as is abundantly shown, not only in His own words that follow, but also in other places in the Bible, that there was a long period of time and a remarkable series of events that must intervene before it could be truly said by anybody that

“the time is at hand,” or “draws near,” of His coming and of the end of the world.

Therefore for any one to say, “The time is at hand,” before this long period of time had passed, and these remarkable events had all occurred, would be only to deceive. Under these circumstances, anyone so saying would be only a deceiver; because he would be speaking only from the imagination of his own heart, and not by the word of the Lord.

Accordingly, on this very thought it is written in another place:

2 Thessalonians 2

¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, *by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and by our gathering together unto Him,

² That you be *not soon* shaken in mind, nor be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as *the day of Christ* IS AT HAND.

³ Let no man deceive you by any means; for *that day shall not come*, EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

⁵ Remember you not, that when I was yet with you, *I told you these things?*

⁶ And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time.

⁷ For the mystery of iniquity does already work; only he who now lets [hinders] will let, until he be taken out of the way.

⁸ And then shall that wicked be revealed, *whom the Lord shall consume* with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall *destroy with the brightness* OF HIS COMING.

⁹ Even him, *whose coming* is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Thus all these things must come to pass before anyone can truly say of the coming of the Lord and the end of the world, that “the

time is at hand,” or “draws near.” And the answer of Jesus to the question of His disciples covers the same time and contemplates the same course of events.

Remember that the question of the disciples as to His coming and the end was,

Matthew 24

³ What shall be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?

And in reply Jesus does not in any sense intimate that there would be no signs, nor that nothing could be known on the subject. But, first of all, He gives full counsel against anybody’s being deceived as to the times, and which will effectually guard against being deceived all who believe His Word. Thus He says:

1. FALSE CHRISTS

Matthew 24

⁵ Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ,

Luke 21 [RV]

⁸ ...and the time is at hand;

Matthew 24 [RV]

⁵ ...and shall lead many astray,

Luke 17

²³ ...go not after them.

2. WARS AND TUMULTS

Mark 13

⁷ And when you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars,

Luke 21 [RV]

⁹ ...and tumults,

Matthew 24

⁶ ...see that you be not troubled...

Luke 21 [RV]

⁹ ...or terrified: for these things must come to pass first,

Matthew 24

⁶ ...but *the end is not yet*.

3. MORE TROUBLES

Luke 21 [RV]

¹⁰ For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be great earthquakes, and in divers places famines and pestilences; and there shall be terrors and great signs from heaven.

4. ONLY THE BEGINNING

Matthew 24 [RV]

⁸ But all these things are the beginning of travail.

5. PERSECUTION

Mark 13

⁹ But take heed to yourselves;

Luke 21

¹² For *before all these things*, they shall lay their hands on you, and shall persecute you,

Matthew 24 [RV]

⁹ ...delivering you up unto tribulation,

Mark 13

⁹ ...to councils,

Luke 21 [RV]

¹² ...and prisons;

Mark 13 [RV]

⁹ ...and in synagogues shall you be beaten; and before governors and kings shall you stand for my name's sake.

6. BETRAYED BY RELATIVES AND FRIENDS

Luke 21 [RV]

¹⁶ You shall be delivered up even by parents,

Mark 13

¹² ...and children,

Luke 21 [RV]

¹⁶ ...and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

7. HATED FOR CHRIST'S NAME

Matthew 10

²² And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

8. GREAT TRIBULATIONS

Mark 13 [RV]

¹⁹ For in those days shall be great tribulations, such as there has not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, no, nor ever shall be.

9. SHORTENING THE DAYS OF PERSECUTION

²⁰ And except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He has chosen, He has shortened the days.

10. FALSE MESSAGES: "LO HERE IS CHRIST"

Mark 13

²¹ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, He is there; believe him not.

11. FALSE PROPHETS, SIGNS AND WONDERS

²² For false christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show great signs and wonders, to seduce if it were possible even the elect.

12. TAKE HEED

Mark 13 [RV]

²³ But take heed: behold, I have told you all things beforehand.

13. FALSE MESSAGES THAT CHRIST HAS COME

Matthew 24

²⁶ If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the wilderness, go not forth: Behold, He is in the inner chamber, believe it not.

14. HIS COMING WILL BE LIKE THE LIGHTNING

Luke 17

²⁴ For as the lightning that lightens out of the one part under heaven and shines unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in His day.

15. THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SURVIVE

Matthew 24 [RV]

¹⁰ And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another.

Luke 21 [RV]

¹⁸ And not a hair of your head shall perish.

16. THEY WILL BE PATIENT

Luke 21

¹⁹ In your patience possess your souls.

17. FALSE PROPHETS

Matthew 24 [RV]

¹¹ And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray.

18. INIQUITY ABOUND, LOVE GROWS COLD

¹² And because iniquity shall be multiplied the love of many shall wax cold.

19. THOSE WHO ENDURE WILL BE SAVED

Matthew 10 [RV]

²² But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.

20. GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM GOES TO THE WORLD

Matthew 24 [RV]

¹⁴ And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in *the whole world* for a testimony unto *all the nations*; and THEN SHALL THE END COME.

That is the true order of things as to *the time* of the coming of the Lord and of the end of the world, and as to the events that should precede His coming and the end of the world. And the

Gospel—glad tidings—of His coming, “this Gospel of the kingdom,” preached in all the world for a testimony to all nations, is the final event that precedes His coming and the end; for:

Matthew 24

¹⁴ ...*then* shall the end come.

For, note, it is not only the commonly-accepted Gospel of salvation of sinners from their sins, which must be preached in the whole world, but it is definitely the glad tidings of *His coming*, this Gospel of *the kingdom*, that is thus to be preached.

This is certain, because that is the great subject of His discourse, and that discourse given in answer to the direct question as to His coming and the end of the world. And, speaking on this subject in answer to the direct question on this subject, He has dwelt on His coming, on the manner of His coming, and on the events which should precede His coming; and then, having reached the ultimate point of the answer to the inquiry, He says,

¹⁴ *This* Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached...

That word “*this* Gospel of the kingdom” fixes it to the preaching in all the world of the glad tidings of His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory—the glad tidings of His coming and kingdom. And when “*this* Gospel of the kingdom” shall have been preached in the whole world, to all nations, *then* THE END WILL COME.

And in the great threefold message of *Revelation* 14:6-12 there is the very complement of this word of Jesus as to the preaching of this Gospel of the kingdom in all the world to all nations. And in *Revelation* 14:14-16 there is the very complement of this word of Jesus as to His coming and the coming of the end, following the preaching of this Gospel of the kingdom. Thus we read:

Revelation 14

⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having *the everlasting Gospel* to *preach* unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for *the hour of His judgment is come*; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

⁸ And *there followed* another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

⁹ And the *third angel followed them*, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...

¹² Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

¹⁴ And I looked, and behold a white cloud; and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle, and reap; for *the time is come for You to reap*; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

¹⁶ And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

And Jesus himself said in another place,

Matthew 13

³⁹ ...the harvest is *the end of the world*.

Thus certain it is that in these scriptures then is shown the message and the time of the preaching of “*this Gospel*” of the coming and kingdom of the Lord, which is to be followed by the very coming of the Lord and of the end of the world, about which the disciples asked.

Thus as to the *manner* and the *time* of His coming, and of the end of the world. What, then, as to “the sign” of His coming and of the end of the world? That will be considered next.

4. The Signs of the Lord's Coming

Signs of the Times, October 24 & 31, 1900

Original title: The Signs of the Lord's Coming and of the End of the World

Matthew 24

³ What shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

THIS question the disciples asked Jesus. And Jesus answered the question directly, and even more fully than they had asked. They asked, "What shall be the *sign*?" and Jesus answered, "There shall be *signs*"—not one only, but a number of them; and these in different places.

But first He tells definitely *the time* when the signs would begin to appear, so that those who would intelligently look for His coming could know when to expect the signs, and as a consequence know that His coming and the end were near. Thus He says,

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days...

...there shall be signs.

After the Tribulation

In the stretch of time that would elapse, and the course of events which would occur between the day of His discourse and the day of His coming and of the end of the world, He had said, as noted in the preceding study, that upon the elect, there...

Matthew 24 [KJV & ERV]

²¹ ...shall be great tribulation, such as there has not been the like, from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, no, nor ever shall be.

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

These are the...

Revelation 12

⁶ ...one thousand two hundred and threescore days,

—each day for a year, in which the church of God—the elect—
was...

Revelation 12

¹⁴ ...nourished...from the face of the serpent,

—and protected from the flood of wrath, which the dragon
through his earthly instrument cast out of his mouth,

¹⁵ ...after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away
of the flood.

They are the days during which the power symbolized by the...

Daniel 7

⁸ ...little horn...

²¹ ...made war with the saints, and prevailed against them,

²⁵ ...and wore out the saints.

They are the days in which Death, on his “pale horse,” rode
prosperously, with Hell following with him, while he killed...

Revelation 6

⁸ ...with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the
beasts of the earth,

—those who must be...

⁹ ...slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they held.

They are the days in which:

Revelation 2

²⁰ ...that woman Jezebel,

Revelation 17

⁵ ...Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of
the earth,

—used her terrible power so astonishingly that she was...

⁶ ...drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of
the martyrs of Jesus.

They are the days in which this...

Daniel 11 [margin]

³¹ ...abomination that astonishes,

–caused many to...

³³ ...fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil,
many days.

Thus “*those days*” are the twelve hundred and sixty years of papal supremacy, which began in 538 AD, at the rooting up of the last of the “three” kingdoms mentioned in *Daniel 7:8, 20, 24*, and ended in 1798 AD, when the papal government was abolished in Rome, when a Roman republic was again declared there, and...

...the old foundations of the Capitol were made again to resound with the cries, if not the spirit, of freedom; and the venerable ensign, S.P.Q.R., after the lapse of fourteen hundred years, again floated in the winds,⁴⁸

–and when the pope was made a prisoner and was carried into captivity in France, where he died at Valence, August 29, 1799. And,

Matthew 24

²⁹ ...the *tribulation* of those days,

–is the terrible persecution inflicted by the Papacy, as shown by the scriptures referred to in the preceding paragraph, and certified in the history of the Dark Ages. But Jesus said,

²² ...those days should be shortened,

–and

²² ...for the elect’s sake.

Daniel 11

³⁴ They shall be helped with a little help,

–said the angel to Daniel.

⁴⁸ Alison’s *History of Europe*, vol. 1.

Revelation 12

¹⁶ The earth helped the woman...

...in the wilderness, wrote John. The tribulation was shortened; the elect were relieved before the days ended, else there would have been none left. The *tribulation* ended in the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773. The days ended 1798 AD. And,

Matthew 24

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation [ended],

–yet before the days ended, the signs of His coming would begin to appear; for said Jesus,

Mark 13

²⁴ In those days, after that tribulation,

–the signs should begin. And where would be the signs? Read:

Matthew 24

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days [in the days],

Luke 21

²⁵ 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;
- ²⁶ Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.

Thus the signs of the coming of the Lord and of the end of the world are to be abundant, and in so many places that it is impossible for anybody to fail to see, at the very least, some of them. The signs are to be in the heavens and on the earth, among the nations, upon the sea, and among men as individuals.

The signs in the heavens are to be in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars. And these are the first signs mentioned. Not only are they the first mentioned, but they are definitely specified as the ones which would begin in the days, and after the tribulation:

Matthew 24 [Mark 13:24]

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days [in the days] the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.

Revelation 6

¹² ...the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.

Joel 2

³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

The Dark Day, 1780

As already stated, the *tribulation* ended in 1773. The *days* ended in 1798. And May 19, 1780, just seven years after the tribulation ended and eighteen years before the days ended, the sun was darkened from about 10 o'clock in the morning all the rest of the day, and till past midnight. And in that night of darkness such as...

...doubtless had not been since the Almighty first gave birth to light,

–the moon, which had *fulled* the day before, appeared *as red as blood*. Of the darkening of the sun, and, consequently, of the moon, one of the best accounts is the following:

Almost if not altogether alone, as the most mysterious and as yet unexplained phenomenon 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 England—which brought intense alarm and distress to multitudes of minds, as well as dismay to the brute creation, and fowls fleeing bewildered to their roosts, and the birds to their nests, and the cattle returning to their stalls.

Indeed, thousands of the good people of that day became fully convinced that the end of all things terrestrial had come, and gave up, for the time, their secular pursuits, and betook themselves to religious devotions; while many others regarded the

darkness as not only a token of God's indignation against the various iniquities and abominations of the age, but also as an omen of some future destruction that might overwhelm the land—as in the case of the countries mentioned in Biblical history—unless speedy repentance and reformation took place.

The ignorant indulged in vagaries and wild conjectures as to the cause of the phenomenon; and those profounder minds, even, that could gauge the heavens and tell the stars, were about usually at loss for any rational explanation of the event.

It is related that the Connecticut Legislature has a session at this time, and that so great was the darkness the members became terrified, and thought that the day of judgment had come; a motion was consequently made to adjourn. At this Mr. Davenport arose and said: "Mr. Speaker, it is either the day of judgment or it is not. If it is not, there is no need of adjourning. If it is, I desire to be bound doing my duty. I move that candles be brought, and that we proceed to business."

The time of the commencement of this extraordinary darkness was between the hours of 10 and 11 in the forenoon of Friday of the date already named; and it continued until the middle of the following night, but with different appearances at different places.

As to the manner of its appearance, it seemed to appear, first of all, in the southwest. The wind came from that quarter, and the darkness appeared to come on with the clouds that came in that direction. The degree to which the darkness arose varied in different localities. In most part it became so dark, that people were unable to read common print distinctly, or accurately determined the time of day by their clocks or watches, or dim, or manage their domestic affairs conveniently without the light of candles. In some places the degree of darkness was just about equal to preventing persons seeing to read ordinary print in the open air for several hours together.

The extent of this darkness was also very remarkable. It was observed at the most easterly regions of New England; westward to the farthest parts of Connecticut, and at Albany; to the southward it was observed all along the seacoasts; and to the north as far as the American settlements extended. It probably far ex-

ceeded these boundaries, but the exact limits were never positively known.

With regard to its duration, it continued in the neighborhood of Boston for at least fourteen or fifteen hours; but it was doubtless longer or shorter in some other places. The appearance and effects were such as tended to make the prospect extremely dull, gloomy, and unnatural.

Candles were lighted up in the houses; the birds, in the midst of their blithesome forenoon enjoyments, stopped suddenly, and, singing their evening songs, disappeared and became silent; the fowls retired to their roosts, the cocks were crowing in their accustomed manner at the break of day; objects could not be distinguished at a comparatively slight distance; and everything bore the aspect and gloom of night,—to say nothing of the effect upon the minds of the people, which, indeed, was quite indescribable.

The above general facts concerning this strange phenomenon were ascertained, after much painstaking inquiry, soon after its occurrence, by Roger Williams, of Harvard College, who also collected together some of the more particular observations made in different parts of the country, relative to the remarkable event.

At 8 in the evening the darkness was so impenetrably thick as to render traveling positively impracticable; and, altho the moon rose nearly...about 9 o'clock, yet it did not give light enough to enable a person to distinguish between the heavens and the earth.

That this darkness was not caused by an eclipse is manifest by the various positions of the planetary bodies at that time; for the moon was more than one hundred and fifty degrees from the sun all that day, and according to accurate calculations made by the most celebrated astronomers, there could not, in the order of nature, be any transit of the planet Venus or Mercury upon the disc of the sun that year; nor could it be a blazing star—much as is a mountain—that darkened the atmosphere; for that would still leave unexplained the deep darkness of the following night.

Nor would such excessive nocturnal darkness follow an eclipse of the sun; and as to the moon, she was at that time more than

forty hours' motion past her opposition.⁴⁹

The Falling of the Stars, 1833

The sign “*in the stars*” is that:

Matthew 24 [Mark 13:25]

²⁹ ...the stars shall fall from heaven.

And that they shall fall...

Revelation 6

¹³ ...as a fig tree casts her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

And so, in 1833, it came to pass.

Extensive and magnificent showers of shooting stars have been known to occur at various places in modern times, but the most universal and wonderful which has ever been recorded is that of the thirteenth of November, 1833, *the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion!*

No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class in the community, or with so much dread and alarm by another. It was the all-engrossing noise of conversation and of scientific disquisition for weeks and months.

Indeed, it could not be otherwise than that such a rare phenomenon,—next in grandeur and sublimity to that of a total solar eclipse, or a great comet stretched athwart the starry heavens in full view of a wonder struck universe—should awaken the deepest interest among all beholding it.

Nor is the memory of this marvelous scene yet extinct: its sublimity and awful beauty still linger in many minds, who also remember well the terror with which the demonstration was regarded, and the mortal fear excited among the ignorant that the end of the world had come.

During the three hours of its continuance, the day of judgment was believed to be only waiting for sunrise, and long after the

⁴⁹ R. M. Devens, *Our First Century*, pp. 89, 90, 93, 95, “Great and Memorable Events.”

shower had ceased, the morbid and superstitious were still impressed with the idea that the final day was at least only a week ahead, impromptu meetings for prayer were held in many places, and many other scenes of religious devotion, or terror, or abandonment of worldly affairs, transpired, under the influence of fear, occasioned by so sudden and awful a display.

But, though in many districts the mass of the population were thus panic-stricken, through fear as well as want of familiarity with the history of such appearances, the more enlightened were profoundly awed at contemplating so vivid a picture of the apocalyptic image—that of:

Revelation 6

¹³ The stars of heaven falling to the earth, even as a fig-tree casting her untimely figs, after she is shaken of a mighty wind.

In describing the effect of this phenomenon upon the black population, a southern planter says:

“I was suddenly awakened by the most distressing cries that ever fell on my ears. Shrieks of horror and cries for mercy could be heard from most of the negroes of three plantations, amounting in all to some six or eight hundred. While earnestly and breathlessly listening for the cause, I heard a faint voice near the door calling my name. I arose, and, taking my sword, stood at the door. At this moment I heard the same voice still beseeching me to rise, and saying, ‘*O my God, the world is on fire!*’

“Then opened the door, and it is difficult to say which excited me most—the awfulness of the scene, or the distressed cries of the negroes. Upwards of one hundred lay prostrate on the ground, some speechless, and others uttering the bitterest moans, and with their hands raised, imploring God to save the world and them. The scene was truly awful, for never did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell towards the earth; east, west, north, and south it was the same.” In a word, *the whole heavens seemed in motion.*

The display, as described in Professor Silliman’s journal, was seen all over North America. The chief scene of the exhibition was within the limits of the longitude of 61° in the Atlantic

Ocean, and that of 100° in Central Mexico, and from the North American lakes to the southern side of the island of Jamaica.

Over this vast area, an appearance presented itself by surpassing in grandeur and magnificence the loftiest reach of the human imagination. From two o'clock until broad daylight, the sky being perfectly serene and cloudless, an incessant play of dazzlingly brilliant luminosities was kept up in the whole heavens. Some of these were of great magnitude and most peculiar form.

One of large size remained for some time almost stationary in the zenith, over the falls of Niagara, emitting streams of light which radiated in all directions. The wild dash of the waters, as contrasted with the fiery commotion above them, formed a scene of unequaled and amazing sublimity.

Arago computes that not less than *two hundred and forty thousand meteors were at the same time visible above the horizon of Boston!* To form some idea of such a spectacle, one must imagine a constant succession of fire-balls, resembling sky-rockets, radiating in all directions, from a point in the heavens near the zenith, and following the arch of the sky towards the horizon. They proceeded to various distances from the radiating point, leaving after them a vivid streak of light, and usually exploding before they disappeared. The balls were of various sizes and degrees of splendor; some were mere points, but others were larger and brighter than Jupiter or Venus; and one, in particular, appeared to be nearly of the moon's size. But at Niagara no spectacle so terribly grand and sublime was ever before beheld by man as that of *the firmament descending in fiery torrents over the dark and roaring cataract.*

The point from which the meteors seemed to issue was observed, by those who fixed the position of the display among the stars, to be in the constellation Leo. At New Haven it appeared in the bend of the "sickle"—a collection of stars in the breast of Leo—a little to the westward of the star Gamma Leonis. By observers at other places remote from each other, it was seen in the same constellation, although in different parts of it. An interesting and important fact in this connection is, that this radiating point was *stationary* among the fixed stars, that is, that it did not move

along with the earth in its diurnal revolution eastward, but accompanied the stars in their apparent progress westward.⁵⁰

In all of these extracts the italics are those of the book itself.

Distress of Nations

Luke 21

²⁵ ...and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity.

This is so today in all the nations; for years it has been so, and it only grows worse. Note that it is not simply distress of nations; this might be, and it might be borne with comparative equanimity, because they might see a way of escape. But it is not so in this word, nor in the time of the fulfillment of that Word; for this is “distress of nations *with perplexity*.” They do not know which way to turn to find assured relief from the distress, and ways that they do take deepen rather than relieve the distress and perplexity.

And everywhere today men’s hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth. Among all classes of people there is this fear because of what is already before them, and wondering what can be the worse which they certainly fear is coming. Then said Jesus,

²⁸ When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh.

They began to come to pass in 1780, and then this redemption was drawing nigh. And next He says,

Matthew 24

³³ When you shall see all these things, then know that it [His coming] is near, even at the doors.

All people can now see all these things. All the signs mentioned as coming “upon the earth,” and among the nations and among men, can be seen in the events of the times in which we live today. And the signs that were to be in the heavens, and which were the beginning ones, all can see in the authentic records of

⁵⁰ R. M. Devens, *Our First Century*, pp. 329, 330, 332.

the events. And today being the time when all can “see all these things,” it is settled by the Word of the Lord that *now* is the time when He would have all to “*know* that He is near, even at the doors.”

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

The definite time, the day and the hour, the times and the seasons, of His coming,

Acts 1

⁷ ...the Father has put in His own power.

And no one, neither man nor angel, can ever make it known. And every one who ever attempts to know it is deceived; and every one who ever attempts to make it known, is both deceived and a deceiver.

But, though no one can ever make known the *day and hour* of the Lord’s coming, this in no wise affects the truth that all may know when His coming “is *near*, even at the doors;” for He said,

Matthew 24

³³ When you shall see all these things *know* that it is near, even at the doors.

And *now* is the time.

Signs in the Heavens

C Dm Em

1. The heav - ens warn - ing, fore - tell the morn - ing,
 2. This truth con - sid - er: Christ's com - ing hith - er,
 3. The first sign giv - en, was seen in Lis - bon,
 4. The last sign near - ing, soon was ap - pear - ing,
 5. With these signs pass - ing, a call to fast - ing,

F G C

The signs are seen in earth and sky.
 As King of kings and Lord on high;
 In sev'n - teen hun - dred fif - ty five;
 In eight - een hun - dred thir - ty three;
 A time for us to watch and pray;

Dm Em

E - vents por - tend - ing, the end de - scend - ing,
 The heav - en's rend - ing, an - gels de - scend - ing,
 A might - y earth - quake, that made the world shake,
 Stars fell sub - lime - ly, like figs un - time - ly,
 No long - er sleep - ing, but turn with weep - ing,

F G C

All pow - ers to the bat - tle fly.
 In flam - ing fire and burn - ing sky.
 With fu - ry, earth and sea did strive.
 When might - y winds shake the fig tree.
 With trem - bling, seek the Lord to - day.

F G C Em

Fear grips the na - tions, men of all sta - tions,
 Leaves fal - ling of - ten, an - nounce the au - tumn;
 The next sign weigh - ty, in sev'n - teen eigh - ty,
 This me - teor show - er, of great - est pow - er,
 No more back - slid - ing, in bus - iness hid - ing,

(1) Fear grips the na - tions, men of all sta -
 (2) Leaves...(etc.)

F G C

The peo - ple sigh - ing, on all sides cry - ing,
 The win - ter's her - ald, by this is car - oled;
 Sun, moon, were dark - en'd, New Eng - land heark - en'd,
 In all di - rec - tions, and flam - ing sec - tions,
 But love a - wak - ing, all sin for - sak - ing,

- tions, the peo - ple sigh - ing, on all sides cry -

F G Am F

Con - fused and yearn - ing, "Who has the learn - ing?"
 So Bi - ble seers, down through the years,
 From morn till mid - night, a day with - out light,
 The scene as - tound - ing, like light - ning bound - ing,
 Let's heed the warn - ing, and greet the morn - ing,

ing, con - fused and yearn - ing, "Who has the learning?" Come

C F G7 C

Come now and to God's word draw nigh.
 Give signs of Je - sus' com - ing nigh.
 All o - ver the A - mer - 'can sky.
 All North A - mer - i - ca did see.
 When our re - demp - tion draw - eth nigh.

now and to God's word draw nigh.

5. Get Ready, Get Ready, Get Ready!

Signs of the Times, November 7, 1900

THE world is now in the time when “all these things” which Jesus mentioned as signs of His coming and of the end of the world, can be seen, and when all may...

Matthew 24

³³ ...know that it is near, even at the doors.

Accordingly it should be expected that all would be most interestedly observing all these things, and getting ready to meet Him...

2 Peter 3

¹⁴ ...in peace, without spot and blameless,

—and with the joyful greeting,

Isaiah 25

⁹ Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

It is in order that all may be thus ready and waiting to meet Him and greet Him, that the Lord has given all this instruction about His coming. He would not have a single soul taken unawares. The more forcibly to impress this upon all, He spoke a parable, saying,

Luke 21

²⁹ Behold, the fig tree and all the trees;

³⁰ When her branch is now become tender, and putting forth its leaves, *you see it*, and *know of your own selves* that the summer is now nigh.

³¹ *Even so you also*, when you see all these things coming to pass, *know* that the kingdom of God is nigh, even at the doors.

³² Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, until all these things shall be accomplished.

³³ Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.

As certainly and as easily as the people of the world know that summer is nigh when the trees put forth leaves, so certainly and so easily may the people of this world know that the coming of the Lord and the end of the world is *now* nigh, and that this generation shall not pass away till these joint events shall be accomplished, and the kingdom of God be come in all its glory. Accordingly Jesus urges upon all people in this time,

Matthew 24

⁴² *Watch therefore; for you know not on what day your Lord comes.*

⁴⁴ Therefore *be also ready; for in an hour that you think not, the Son of man comes.*

Luke 21 [RV]

³⁴ *Take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life and that day come on you suddenly as a snare:*

³⁶ But *watch at every season, making supplication, that you may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*

Mark 13

³³ *Take heed, WATCH and pray: for you know not when the time is.*

³⁴ For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

³⁵ WATCH THEREFORE: for you know not when the master of the house comes, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

³⁶ Lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping.

³⁷ And what I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH.

And yet for all this instruction, all this warning, and all this exhortation, to know, to be ready, and to watch, only a few will do so. The great mass of the world's people will refuse the instruction, despise the warning, and resist the exhortation, and will follow the way of the world, even to ruin. So fully is this true that only the days of Noah and the days of Lot can supply a fitting parallel. And thus the Lord says:

Matthew 24 [RV]

³⁷ As were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man.

³⁸ For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

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

Luke 17

²⁸ Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;

²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

³⁰ *Even thus* shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Both in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, all the people could have known as really as Noah and Lot knew what was coming, and so could all have escaped instead of all being destroyed. They *did* not know, simply because they *would* not know. They were instructed, they were warned, they were exhorted concerning the coming flood, and also concerning the impending destruction of Sodom; but they would not believe the word. They could have known all, simply by believing the word; but they would not believe, and therefore did not and could not know.

Even so it is now. The word is ample; the message is distinct; the instruction is definite; the warning is faithful; the exhortation is sufficient; but the great mass of the people will not *believe*, and therefore cannot know. Every soul can know all, and so can be delivered from the coming destruction, and saved with the Lord's full salvation, if he will only simply believe the Word.

But they will not believe. Instead, they actually turn into...

2 Peter 3

³ ...scoffers, walking after their own lusts;

⁴ And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

⁵ For this they willingly are ignorant of, that *by the word of God* the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water;

⁶ Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished;

⁷ But the heavens and the earth, which are now, *by the same word* are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Indeed, these scoffers are found even among the professed servants of the true Master. But they are evil servants; as said the Master himself:

Matthew 24

⁴⁸ If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delays His coming;

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

⁵⁰ The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of;

⁵¹ And shall cut him asunder, and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

From this it is evident that in these times there will be found among the professed servants of the Lord, unfaithfulness to Christian truth, and only pretensions to piety. Even so it is written:

2 Timothy 3

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³ Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴ Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵ *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power* thereof; from such turn away.

So much is this so that Jesus was forced to exclaim:

Luke 18

⁸ When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

Nevertheless, there are some who will believe, who, like Noah, in spite of the evil tide drawing away from God, will set themselves to walk with God. These also, as Noah, will cease not to proclaim the truth of God for the time, and will warn the world that the Lord is coming that the end is near, that destruction hastens and that men must escape for their lives. Therefore, and of these, the Lord says:

Matthew 24

⁴⁵ Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has set over His household, to give them their food in due season?

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He comes, shall find *so doing*.

⁴⁷ Verily I say unto you, that He will set him over all that He has.

All these will gladly see the Lord come. And they will see Him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. For soon...

²⁹ ...the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,

³⁰ And *there* shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

³¹ And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first;

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be *caught up together with them* in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so *shall we ever be with the Lord*.

¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Resurrection Morning

1. In the resurrection morning
 We shall see the Saviour coming.
And the sons of God a-shouting
 In the kingdom of the Lord.

Chorus

We shall rise, we shall rise,
 When the mighty trumpet rends the azure skies
We shall rise, we shall rise,
 In the resurrection morning we shall rise.

2. We feel the advent glory;
 While the vision seems to tarry.
We will comfort one another
 With the words of Holy Writ.

3. By faith we can discover
 That our warfare'll soon be over
And we'll shortly hail each other
 On fair Canaan's happy shore.

4. We will tell the pleasing story,
 When we meet our friends in glory,
And we'll keep ourselves all ready
 For to hail the heavenly King.

6. The Destruction of Jerusalem: Its Meaning Today

Signs of the Times, November 14 & 21, 1900

THERE is yet one important part of the Lord's discourse concerning the sign of His coming and the end of the world, which must be noticed—that is, the part relating to the destruction of Jerusalem.

It must be remembered that it was the disciples showing to Jesus the wonderful structure of the temple that was the occasion which called forth this whole grand discourse upon the subject of the signs of His coming and of the end of the world. The whole story is as follows:⁵¹

Matthew 24 [RV]

¹ And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on His way.

Mark 13 [RV]

¹ And as He went forth,

Matthew 24 [RV]

¹ ...His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple;

Mark 13 [RV]

¹ ...and one of His disciples said unto Him, Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!

Luke 21 [RV]

⁵ And some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings.

Matthew 24 [RV]

⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto them,

⁵¹ PP Editor's Note: the following quotes were originally written as paragraphs. I have separated out the phrases into their corresponding Bible books. It is possible that Jones was quoting from a book that combined the gospels into one continuous narrative. I looked at a few of these types of books, from the 1800's, but could not find one that quoted the verses in the same way.

Mark 13

² Do you see these great buildings?

Luke 21

⁶ As for these things which you behold,

Matthew 24

² Verily I say unto you,

Luke 21 [RV]

⁶ The days will come, in which there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Mark 13 [RV]

³ And as He sat on the Mount of Olives, over against the temple,

Matthew 24

³ ...the disciples,

Mark 13

³ ...Peter and James and John and Andrew,

Matthew 24

³ ...came unto Him,

Mark 13

³ ...and asked Him privately, [saying,]⁵²

Luke 21 [RV]

⁷ Master, [tell us,]⁵³ when therefore shall these be?

Mark 13 [RV]

⁴ ...and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?

Matthew 24

³ ...and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

Now in this whole discourse in answer to these questions, the only reference that Jesus made to the destruction of Jerusalem is

⁵² *Matthew 24:3 [RV].*

⁵³ *Matthew 24:3 [RV].*

less than two dozen lines, in the midst of His discourse, after He had sketched the events between that time and the end of the world, and just at the beginning of that part of His discourse in which He proceeds to give the signs of His coming and the *time* when the signs would begin to appear. From this fact, as well as from the causes and character of the destruction of Jerusalem, it is evident that the destruction of Jerusalem is itself a sign by which can be known the times of the Lord's coming and of the end of the world, just as the fall of ancient Babylon is likewise such a sign. It is in the light of this suggestion that we shall here study that part of the Lord's discourse relating to the destruction of Jerusalem.

That part of the Lord's discourse is as follows:

Mark 13

¹⁴ When therefore you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, where he ought not (let him that reads understand);

Luke 21

²⁰ And when you see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand.

²¹ Then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains; and let them that are in the midst of her depart out and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

Matthew 24

¹⁷ Let him that is on the housetop not come down, nor enter in, to take out the things that are in his house;

¹⁸ And let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak.

Luke 21

²² For these are the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled.

²³ But woe unto them that are with child and them that give suck in those days!

Matthew 24

²⁰ And pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath.

Luke 21

²³ For there shall be great distress upon the land and wrath upon this people.

The Center of Controversy

Why did all this come upon that people? Why was Jerusalem destroyed? Because they rejected the Lord, of course. But why did they reject the Lord? What was the particular issue in which centered and culminated their opposition to the Lord and their rejection of Him? The answer to these questions is, That issue was the Sabbath,—the distinction between *His* principles as to what is true Sabbath-keeping and their views upon the same point.

In nothing had the selfishness of the Pharisees and doctors of the law taken a more perverse turn than in the matter of the Sabbath and its true meaning and purpose. So far as the Lord's meaning and purpose in His Sabbath are concerned, they had utterly lost sight of it themselves, and by their traditions, and exactions had completely hidden it from the minds and hearts of the people. This was the crowning result of their perverse-minded course. And as Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, and as to bring to mind what He is to mankind, is the true intent of the Sabbath,—in other words, He himself, as He lived among them, being the manifestation of the true intent of the Sabbath,—it is evident that in nothing could His course arouse more or more bitter antagonism from these men than in His words and actions with relation to the Sabbath.

It was with reference to this that they began their persecution of Him; it was regarding this that they first entertained the thought of killing Him; and it was upon this issue that their opposition culminated in the actual crucifying of Him. This issue became clearly defined at His second Passover, at the pool of Bethesda, when Jesus healed the impotent man. Thus we read:

John 5

⁵ A certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

⁶ When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case. He said unto him, Will you be made whole?

⁷ The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.

⁸ Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk.

⁹ And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked; *and on the same day was the Sabbath.*

¹⁰ The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, *It is the Sabbath day; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.*

¹¹ He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk.

¹² Then they asked him, *What man is that* which said unto you, Take up your bed, and walk?

¹³ And he that was healed knew not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

¹⁴ Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, you are made whole; sin no more lest a worse thing come unto you.

¹⁵ The man departed, and *told the Jews that it was Jesus*, which had made him whole.

Of course they then knew who it was who had told him to do this “unlawful” thing,—to take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath day.

¹⁶ *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.*

Now think of this: Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the sign of what He is to mankind. He then was in His life the living expression of the Sabbath. Therefore it was impossible for Him to do anything on the Sabbath that was not Sabbath-keeping; because the very doing of it was in itself the expression of the meaning of the Sabbath.

But His Sabbath-keeping did not suit the Sabbath ideas of the Pharisees and the doctors of the law and the scribes. They, therefore, called it Sabbath-*breaking*. Now Christ's ideas of the Sabbath are God's ideas of the Sabbath. The Pharisees' ideas of the Sabbath and of Sabbath-keeping, being directly the opposite of the Lord Jesus' ideas, were wrong. Therefore the controversy in that day between Christ and the Pharisees and the doctors of the law, was simply whether God's ideas of the Sabbath should prevail, or whether man's ideas of it should prevail.

John 5

¹⁶ Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.

¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work.

¹⁸ *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him*, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making himself equal with God.

By this we further see that the very first open steps that the Pharisees and the doctors of the law ever took against Jesus Christ to do Him harm in any way, were taken because He had not kept the Sabbath to suit them. That was the controversy between Christ and them; and upon this point everything else turned.

Shortly after this we have the record in the 2nd chapter of *Mark*, twenty-third verse, to the 3rd chapter, sixth verse; it is also in the 12th chapter of *Matthew*, and the 6th of *Luke*, verses 1-12; but Mark's record gives a point that is not in either of the others, and it is all-important:

Mark 2

²³ And it came to pass, that He went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

²⁴ And the Pharisees said unto Him, *Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day, that which is not lawful?*

²⁵ And He said unto them, Have you never read what David did, when he had need, and was a hungered; he, and they that were with him?

²⁶ How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him?

²⁷ And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;

²⁸ Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

Mark 3

¹ And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

² *And they watched Him*, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day; *that they might accuse Him*.

He knew that their attention was all on Him. And that they might have the fullest evidence possible, He called to the man who had the withered hand, and said to him,

Luke 6

⁸ Stand forth in the midst.

The man stepped out into the midst of the synagogue. This drew everybody's attention to Jesus and the man standing there waiting. Then He asked the Pharisees and those who were accusing Him,

Mark 3

⁴ Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?

They could not say it was lawful to do evil, for that would be contrary to all their own teaching, and they did not dare to say it was lawful to do good, because then they would sanction His healing this man on the Sabbath.

⁴ Is it lawful...to save life, or to kill?

They did not dare to say it was lawful to kill, and they did not dare to say it was lawful to save life; for He told them, and they knew that it was so, that if one of them had a sheep that fell into

a ditch on the Sabbath day, he would pull it out to save its life. Whether they would do this out of mercy to the sheep, or for fear of losing the price of it, matters not. They knew it was so. Therefore,

⁴ ...they held their peace.

⁵ And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other.

⁶ And the Pharisees went forth, *and straightway took counsel with the Herodians* against Him, *how they might destroy Him.*

Confederation Against Christ

The Herodians were a sect of the Jews, who stood at the extreme opposite pole from the Pharisees. They derived their title—Herodians—from being the friends, the supporters, and the rigid partisans of Herod and his house in their rule over the nation of Israel. The Pharisees were the “godly” of the nation, especially in their own estimation. They held themselves to be the righteous ones of the nation, the ones who stood the closest to God; and therefore they stood farthest from Herod and from Rome. They despised Herod; they hated Rome. The Herodians were the political supporters of Herod, and consequently the friends of Rome and Roman power. Therefore, as denominations, as sects, the Pharisees and the Herodians were just as far apart as they could be.

Now when the Pharisees saw that Christ would not yield to their ideas of Sabbath-keeping, they, in order to carry out their purpose to kill Him—it was a far-reaching purpose—joined themselves, not only to their sectarian enemies, but to these *particular* religio-*political* sectarian enemies, so that they could secure the influence of Herod, so that they might have the government on their side, that they might have the civil power under their control, and thus make effectual their purpose to destroy Jesus. Thus they entered politics. After this we read:

John 7

¹ After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

However, when the annual Feast of Tabernacle came,

¹⁴ About the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

As He was teaching, He said to them:

¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law? *Why do you go about to kill me?*

²⁰ The people answered and said, You have a devil; who goes about to kill You?

²¹ Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and you all marvel.

²² Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers); and you on the Sabbath day circumcise a man.

²³ If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; *are you angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?*

²⁴ Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Even at that time, these, His enemies,

³⁰ ...sought to take Him, [yet] no man laid hands on Him.

And later in the same day,

³² ...the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.

Yet neither did the officers lay hands on Him. And when the officers returned without bringing Him, the chief priests and the Pharisees were so enraged that they were on the point of officially condemning Him anyhow, and were checked only by the word of Nicodemus,

⁵¹ Does our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he does?

The next instance in this controversy is recorded in the 9th chapter of *John*—the case of the giving of sight to the man born blind.

John 9

¹⁴ *And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.*

¹⁶ *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because He keeps not the Sabbath day.*

The next instance is in *Luke 13:10-16*:

Luke 13

¹⁰ *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.*

¹¹ *And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.*

¹² *And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.*

¹³ *And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*

¹⁴ *And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.*

¹⁵ *The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?*

¹⁶ *And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?*

Increasing Antagonism

As they continued to watch Him to see whether He would heal people, and otherwise do good on the Sabbath day, He continued to heal on the Sabbath day. Another instance in point is recorded in *Luke 14:1-6*:

Luke 14

¹ And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched Him.

² And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy.

³ And Jesus answering spoke unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

⁴ And they held their peace. And He took him, and healed him, and let him go;

⁵ And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

⁶ And they could not answer Him again to these things.

Thus He continued to grow in favor with the people, and the more to incur the antagonism of the chief priests, the Pharisees, and the Herodians. When at last He had gone so far as to raise from the dead a man who had been dead four days, and when, as a consequence,

John 11

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews...believed on Him,

–this so aroused His enemies that:

⁴⁶ Some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

And then and there the chief priests and the Pharisees in council said:

⁴⁷ What do we? for this man does many miracles.

⁴⁸ If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

Note the argument that was in their hearts, and in their *words*, in fact. They were accusing Jesus all the time of Sabbath-breaking; and now they say,

⁴⁸ If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him,

—and that will make all men Sabbath-breakers. The nation will be a nation of Sabbath-breakers. And when the whole nation becomes a nation of Sabbath-breakers, the judgments of God will be visited upon us; and the Lord will bring the Romans, and sweep away the whole nation. *Then*, in that same meeting,

John 11

⁴⁹ One of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all,

⁵⁰ Nor consider that *it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

⁵³ Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death.

And a few days afterward they accomplished to the full their purpose, and did put Him to death. And when that was done, the doom of the nation was fixed; and it was only a question of time when would come the destruction of the temple, the city, and the people. They said,

⁴⁸ If we let this man thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.

They did *not* let Him alone, *and the Romans came and took away both their place and nation forevermore.* Their efforts to *save* the nation *destroyed* the nation.

And let it never be forgotten that the one great issue, above all others, on which they rejected Him, and persecuted Him, and sought to kill Him, was the Sabbath of the Lord as against a sabbath of men, the true Sabbath as against a false one, the Lord's idea of the Sabbath as against man's idea of the Sabbath.

And in all the time of the impending destruction, and even in the very crisis of their experience in connection therewith—when they should see the given sign, in Jerusalem being encompassed with armies—the Sabbath was still an issue, and of vital consideration. For in all their thoughts as to their flight from the sure coming destruction, this word of Jesus must ever be remembered,

Matthew 24

²⁰ *Pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on THE SABBATH DAY.*

As to the destruction of Jerusalem, we have seen that it was false ideas of the Sabbath, set against the true, that caused the nation of the Jews to reject, to persecute, and to seek to kill Jesus, and that it was this rejection of Him that caused that destruction. They rejected and slew Him, lest the Romans should come and take away both their place and nation; and their rejection and slaying of Him resulted in the Romans coming and taking away both their place and nation. Their rejection of the Sabbath of the Lord, and in that rejection, the rejection of Him who was and is the Lord of the Sabbath, caused the ruin of that nation.

It is not necessary here to enter into the details of the destruction of Jerusalem and that nation; that is well known; and, besides, our study here is to discover what bearing that has on the great subject of the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world. Let us follow *this* subject to its conclusion.

An Instrument of Destruction

The instrument of the destruction of Jerusalem and the nation of the Jews, was the Roman armies:

Luke 21

²⁰ *When you therefore shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation is nigh.*

The only armies that there were at that time were the Roman armies; for “the empire of the Romans filled the world.”⁵⁴ And the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem in fulfillment of the words of Jesus recorded by Luke,⁵⁵ was...

Matthew 24

¹⁵ *...the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place,*

⁵⁴ Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter III.

⁵⁵ *Luke 21:20.*

—in fulfillment of the words of Jesus recorded by Matthew.⁵⁶

Now the abomination of desolation—the Roman power—spoken of by Daniel the prophet, when once it enters upon the scene of history and prophecy, continues *unto the coming of the Lord and the end of the world*. Notice that in *Daniel 7* he beheld in the vision a fourth beast, a fourth kingdom, which is Rome,

Daniel 7

⁷ ...dreadful and terrible...

⁶ ...the beast had also...

⁷ ...ten horns.

As Daniel considered the horns, there came up

⁸ ...another *little horn*, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

Daniel beheld this “little horn” in its working and its speaking,

²² Until the Ancient of Days came,...

¹⁰ ...and the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

And at the time of the judgment says he,

¹¹ I beheld *then* because of the great words which the HORN SPOKE: I beheld even till the BEAST was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

Note that he was beholding the “little horn.” He was considering the “little horn.” At the time of the judgment he beheld especially because of the great *words* which the “horn spoke.” And he beheld even till—the *horn* was destroyed?—No, but till...

¹¹ ...*the beast* was slain, and *his* body *destroyed*, and given to the burning flame.

This makes it perfectly plain that the “little horn” is but the continuation of the beast, in another form; so fully is the “*little horn*” a continuation of the spirit and characteristics and power of

⁵⁶ *Matthew* 24:15.

“*the beast*,” that when comes the time of the destruction of the horn, instead of saying that *the horn* was destroyed, he says THE BEAST was slain and destroyed. And this makes it perfectly plain that when the beast enters upon the scene, he continues, only under another phase, until the coming of the Lord and the end of the world.

Again: In *Daniel* 8:9-12, 23-25, this same power is again symbolized by...

Daniel 8

⁹ ...a *little horn* which waxed exceeding great.

And it continues clear through till the end of the world, when it is...

²⁵ ...broken without hand,

–in the setting up of the kingdom of God, when the stone cut out *without hand* breaks in pieces and consumes all kingdoms of earth, and it stands forever.⁵⁷ And in this prophecy of *Daniel* 8 this power is directly referred to as...

¹³ ...the transgression of desolation;

–while in *Daniel* 11:31 and 12:11 the same power is definitely called...

Daniel 11

³¹ ...the abomination that makes desolate.

And in all these places the connection shows that it continues unto...

Daniel 12

⁹ ...the time of the end,

–and even unto the end. And again: In *Daniel* 11:4 there is marked the concurrence of events which calls into the field of prophecy and history the Roman power. And when the Roman

⁵⁷ *Daniel* 7:34-35.

power does enter the field, the Word says that it is done “to establish the vision”:

Daniel 11

¹⁴ The children of robbers shall exalt themselves *to establish the vision*.

This shows that the Roman power was the great object of the vision; that whatever was given preceding the rise of that power, was given only as certain stepping-stones unto the time when that power should rise; and that when this power was met, in its rise, the object of the vision was met—the vision was established. And when that power is once entered upon the scene, it continues, if not in one phase then just as certainly in another, till the time of the coming of the Lord and the end of the world.

Therefore, when Jesus cited “the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” in that very thing He brought to mind that which would continue unto the coming of the Lord and the end of the world. And when Jesus cited this power in His discourse upon the sign of His coming and of the end of the world, this certifies that in the career of that power there is that which is instructive as to His coming and the end of the world. And when He cited this power as the one which would betray Jerusalem, then this certifies that in the destruction of Jerusalem there is that which is instructive as to His coming and the end of the world.

Now it was their rejection of the Lord Jesus that brought upon that people the destruction of their city and nation by the Roman power—the abomination of desolation. And by the plain showing of the Gospels we have seen that it was in rejecting the divine idea of the Sabbath of the Lord that they rejected the Lord of the Sabbath, and persecuted Him, and sought to kill Him, until they had killed Him, to save the nation from the Romans, but which only caused the nation to be destroyed by the Romans.

And then, at a later date in its history, this Roman power, this abomination of desolation, at the time of the development of the “little horn” of *Daniel* 7:8—this power itself rejected God’s idea of

the Sabbath, and set up wholly man's idea of it; rejected the true Sabbath and set up a wholly false one, even to the substituting of another *day*—Sunday—for the Lord's day, the Sabbath day which God had established and appointed. It was said by those who did it,

“All things whatsoever that was duty to do on the Sabbath day, these we have transferred to the Sunday.”

Laws were enacted by the Roman power to compel all to accept the false idea of the Sabbath instead of the true. All who would observe the Sabbath of the Lord were “accursed from Christ,” and whosoever did not accept the false, was held guilty of sacrilege and subject to penalties from the Roman power—the abomination of desolation.

And what was the consequence of this second course of rejecting the Sabbath of the Lord, and in that the Lord of the Sabbath? What came upon this second nation that did that thing? It likewise was brought to ruin, and was swept from the earth as completely as was the nation of the Jews that first did that heaven-daring thing. The Roman Empire was as utterly ruined as was the Jewish nation.

A Lesson to the United States

And *now*, in these last days, in these days when we know that the coming of the Lord...

Matthew 24

³³ ...is near, even at the doors,

—in these days “the abomination of desolation,” the Roman power, exists in a different phase from that of the days of the destruction of Jerusalem, and also in a somewhat different phase from that of the days of the destruction of the Roman Empire. And in *these days* this abomination of desolation still insists upon that rejection of God's idea of the Sabbath, and the substitution of man's; the rejection of the true, and the acceptance, even by force, of the false. And in this heaven-daring thing, in this thing which

has *twice* wrought, as a world-example, the ruin of nations, the abomination of desolation has gained the support of THE UNITED STATES.

The United States, as certainly as ever did Jerusalem, or as ever did Rome, has rejected God's idea of the Sabbath, and has accepted man's—"the man of sin;" it has rejected the true, and has set up the false, to be forced upon all people by the power of the State. In her legislation of 1893, God's idea of the Sabbath was read in His own words from His own Word, and then that was deliberately set aside and rejected, and one utterly false in every respect was accepted and established here by governmental recognition. This nation, as really as did Jerusalem, or as did Rome, in thus rejecting the Sabbath of the Lord, has in this, rejected the Lord of the Sabbath.

And what must be the consequence? What only *can* be the consequence? Can this nation now fare any better than fared Jerusalem and Rome in doing the same thing? Can it be fairly hoped that she can fare as well as did they, since she has done this thing in the face of these two world-warning destructions? But how shall destruction come here for this heaven-daring offense? It came to Jerusalem by the Roman power. It came to the Roman Empire by the barbarians of the North. Whence can it come next in punishment of this offense of the king? It comes in the brightness of the consuming glory of the coming of the Lord, and the armies of heaven following Him upon white horses, when out of His mouth goes the sharp sword with which He shall smite the nations.⁵⁸ And this is why it is that the destruction of Jerusalem is a sign to the people of the United States today, and why it is a sign of the coming of the Lord and of the end of the world.

And when the "abomination of desolation," as it is today, Rome, as it is in its latest phase, shall have gathered to her principles and under her influence all the nations; and when, by the example,

⁵⁸ *Revelation* 19:11-21; *Joel* 2:1-11.

and power, and influence of the United States the abomination of desolation shall have done this only the more effectually; and when by the power thus regained the abomination of desolation shall have accomplished once more and finally for her, to scatter the power of the holy people, and shall have made as effectual as possible the rejection of the Sabbath of the Lord, and in that the Lord of the Sabbath; *then* it is written,

Daniel 12

⁷ All these things shall be finished.

And as that power will be universal, so the destruction will be universal—and this at the coming of the Lord; for this...

Matthew 24

¹⁵ ...abomination of desolation,

2 Thessalonians 2

³ [this] man of sin,

⁷ [this] mystery of iniquity,

⁸ [is to be] consumed with the spirit of His mouth, [and is to be] destroyed with the brightness of His coming.

And this is why it is that the destruction of Jerusalem is instructive of warning to all the people of the world today. And this is why it is that the destruction of Jerusalem is a sign, among the other “signs,” of the coming of the Lord and the end of the world.

And now is the time.

“Get ready! get ready! get ready!”

Appendix

This Generation Shall Not Pass

By Frank Zimmerman

Matthew 24

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

THERE was a common misunderstanding prevalent among Adventists in the mid to late 1800's, that the "generation" referred to in this prophecy given by Christ, was a period of time, covering the average lifespan of a human on this earth (*i.e.*, about 70 years). Most likely the length of this "lifespan" was based on texts such as:

Psalm 90

¹⁰ The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Josiah Litch dated the "generation" from the dark day of 1780, and wrote in 1842:

But if it is understood of a generation of *threescore years and ten*, the age of man, and applied to those who saw the beginning of these signs, sixty-two years ago, then seventy years, or a generation, will not pass away before the last event will take place. About seven years more remain of the generation; but they cannot be fulfilled before Christ comes, without destroying His word of promise.⁵⁹

James White wrote, in 1868:

And the very generation of men that live after the three great signs are fulfilled, and who hear and reject the warning message, will drink the unmingled cup of the wrath of God. And those of this very generation who receive the message, suffer disappointment and endure the trials of the waiting position, will witness

⁵⁹ Josiah Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, Vol. 1, Chap. 5: "The Signs of the Times".

the coming of Christ, and exclaim, “Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him.”⁶⁰

J. N. Loughborough explained it this way:

The Lord’s appointed time for the people to learn a parable of the fig-tree dates this side of 1833. Here is the Lord’s time for the world to be aroused to the great truth that His coming is at the doors, and that His coming will be before the generation who hear that parable shall pass away.⁶¹

And again here:

The last of these events—the falling of the stars—was fulfilled in 1833. Since that date we have entered upon the last generation, the generation that shall not pass away until Christ shall come.⁶²

Stephen Haskell said:

- *Luke* 21:28-31. The signs began to come to pass in 1780, and now they have come to pass.
- *Matthew* 24:33, margin. Saviour at the door.
- *Luke* 21:32; *Matthew* 24:34. This generation shall not pass till all these things are fulfilled. DA 632. It must be either the generation addressed by the Saviour or the generation that saw the signs fulfilled.
- *Luke* 11:29. The generation living in Christ’s day had only one sign, and therefore could not be the one that would not pass away until all things were fulfilled. DA 632, 406.
- *Matthew* 24:35. God’s word can not fail. DA 234, 235.
- *Luke* 21:34-36. Need of preparation.⁶³

A. T. Jones wrote:

And the very generation of men that live after, the three great signs are fulfilled, and who hear and reject the warning message

⁶⁰ James White, *Life Incidents*, “Present Position and Work,” 1868.

⁶¹ J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, Chapter V, “The Second Advent Message,” 1905.

⁶² J. N. Loughborough, *Last Day Tokens*, Chapter 4, “The Last Generation,” 1904.

⁶³ Stephen Haskell, *Bible Handbook*, “Second Advent of Christ,” 1919.

of Heaven, will drink the cup of the unmingled wrath of God.⁶⁴

Jones wrote yet more clearly:

It is a solemn to contemplate, yet we firmly believe it is truth, the signs have been fulfilled, and that the generation which saw the wonderful shower of falling stars in 1833, the last of the signs, will not pass away till the Lord himself shall descend from heaven.⁶⁵

E. J. Waggoner wrote:

Nothing can possibly be more clear than that He will come within one generation from the fulfillment of the signs which He has named, and that no one knows, other than God himself, what date within that generation will be the day of His coming.⁶⁶

So, according to these statements, many Adventist expositors took a generation as 70 years, and dated it from the last of the “signs in the heavens,” namely the falling stars of 1833. 70 years added to 1833 would be 1903. They never actually mentioned the date, but it was clear from what they expounded that 1903 would mark the very near termination of that time period.

Even in 1903, the last year for this fulfillment according to their understanding, Waggoner still wrote:

His word has been pledged that He will come to the generation that was alive seventy years ago.⁶⁷

However, Waggoner started to entertain the thought that Christ might “tarry” because of His people not being ready:

Some say that Christ’s coming cannot be near, or He would have come before this, if we had entered on the last generation

⁶⁴ A. T. Jones, *An Exposition of Matthew 24*, “This Generation Shall Not Pass,” 1890.

⁶⁵ *Idem*, “This Generation”.

⁶⁶ E. J. Waggoner, *The Present Truth*, “Therefore Be Ye Also Ready,” April 15, 1897.

⁶⁷ E. J. Waggoner, *The Present Truth*, “The Editor’s Private Corner. The Last Generation,” October 1, 1903.

seventy years ago. He does not come because His people are not ready for Him, He is at the door, but He tarries there in mercy. Those who profess His name would be destroyed if He came upon these and found them unready.⁶⁸

This makes me wonder if there was a mini-disappointment when it became clear that the work was not going to end at that time. This could explain some of the anxiety around re-organization in 1901 and how A. T. Jones was very discouraged that this reorganization did not go as he thought was necessary for the quick finishing of the work.

William Miller, by the way, understood the *Matthew 24* statement differently. He interpreted “this generation” to mean the elect of God:

Here is the great stumbling-block to many. Christ is talking about His elect, His children, and His generation; and not, as some will have it, about the generations that then lived on the earth; for they did undoubtedly pass off, a large share of them; for it was about thirty-six years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

But His kingdom has never been taken from the earth. Although they have been hunted from one part of the earth to another; although they have been driven into caves and dens of mountains; have been slain, burnt, sawn asunder; have wandered as pilgrims and strangers on the earth;—yet the “blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church;” and Christ has had, and will have, a people on the earth, until His second coming. *1 Peter 2:9*; “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,” etc.

The Psalmist says, “A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.” *Psalm 22:30*. I humbly believe that Christ has quoted the sentiment contained in the 102nd Psalm, 25th to last verse:

“Of old have You laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

shall You change them, and they shall be changed; but You are the same, and your years shall have no end. The children of your servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before You.”

Here we see the Psalmist has expressed the same sentiment that I understand Christ to have given in these two verses, which I conclude is the proper explanation.⁶⁹

Charles Fitch explains it this way:

What then? “A seed shall serve Him; it shall be counted to the Lord for a generation.” The generation of Christ’s seed, then, shall not pass away from this world, until the things which Christ spoke of are fulfilled.⁷⁰

The Millerite interpretation has stood the test of time, and if anything, may even have more luster, when considered in the light of the question “How long?” in *Daniel* 8:13. I quote from the book, *God’s Way in the Sanctuary*, the first chapter, “The Landmarks Stand”:

“Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spoke, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

“And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

For a very long time prior to the giving of this vision, the sanctuary and the host had been trodden underfoot with the consequent loss of the daily and the deprivation of the land. It was still to go on for a long time into the future but not forever. There was to come a time when never more would the sanctuary and the host be trodden underfoot and the daily taken away. That time would be at the end of the two thousand, three hundred days.

⁶⁹ William Miller, *Miller’s Works*, Volume 2, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843*, Lecture 1, “The Second Appearing of Christ,” 1842.

⁷⁰ Charles Fitch, *The Glory of God in the Earth*, “Conclusion,” 1843.

With the advent of that date would be the assurance that, inasmuch as God's true people would never again be brought into Babylonian bondage, and would never again be deprived of the sanctuary and the daily, the work would be finished, an end made of sin and sinners, everlasting righteousness brought in, and Christ exalted forever as the King of kings and Prince of Peace.

It must never be overlooked that *Daniel* 8:14 is the answer to the question put in the previous verse. Therefore, the determination of the date when the time period ends is the declaration to God's army that they have before them the perfect opportunity to complete their commission, for they know that never again will they be enslaved, lose the sanctuary and its marvelous High Priest, or the daily ministrations of that priesthood.

Thus the Scripture, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," ("...restored to its rightful state." RSV), is of priceless value to God's true people. No wonder it is regarded askance by the enemies of God's truth. Let it be. The true sheep will rejoice in possession of so wonderful a gem of living truth. Inspired by its promise, armed by the power of the God who spoke it, they will go forward as the mightiest army in human history, filled with the love, wisdom, character, and power of the Almighty to vanquish the forces of darkness—forever.

Then "...those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." *Daniel* 12:3. RSV⁷¹

The question, "How long?" of *Daniel* 8, is answered "unto 2300 days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed (or properly restored)." After 1844, as Fred Wright explained, the message of the gospel, and the connection of the people of God to the Sanctuary in heaven and Christ's work there, would never be lost again, so it would go on to completeness.

That's exactly what *Matthew* 24 states: "this generation," that is, the people "generated" or "created anew" by the gospel message that the Lord brings at that time, just after the three signs appear

⁷¹ F. T. Wright, *God's Way in the Sanctuary*, Chapter 1, "The Landmarks Stand."

in the heavens, will not pass away; there will be a continuous line of spiritually-born people who carry the message unto completion, to the “perfect day.”⁷² There will be no more sliding into bondage and darkness so that the message is entirely lost, and the work of recovery has to start all over again. *Revelation 10:7* states:

Revelation 10

⁷ In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.

And the seventh angel includes:

Revelation 11

¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should give reward unto your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth.

The time of the dead to be judged started in 1844. The nations were angry shortly after that. Preparations for war, the inventions of machines that could kill men in great quantities, were taking place in the later 1800’s, and these preparations eventually culminated in the two world wars, and many other costly battles since that time. And the destroying of the earth is going ahead quite well, with the changes in climate, effects of pollution, extinction of species, etc.

The generation of God, those who were regenerated by His everlasting gospel, those who have tasted of the “powers of the world to come,”⁷³ will never pass from the earth, until Christ comes. He will have a seed to greet Him at His coming, in spite of their small numbers, and the massive powers arraigned against them, and the very real danger of the extinction of human life on the planet. But they “will not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” Thank the Lord!

⁷² *Proverbs 4:18.*

⁷³ *Hebrews 6:5.*

