

THE KING,
THE BRIDEGROOM,

AND

The Tribes of Israel.

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REMARKS ON MATTHEW XXIV. XXV.

WE must regard these chapters as a whole. It is one of our Lord's prophetic addresses, and enough to show the vast importance of the subject. It is very comprehensive, and instructs us as to the Jews and the elect of Israel up to the Lord's appearing; the state of Christendom during His absence; and a sessional judgment of the Gentile nations after His coming in glory. Those who love the Lord Jesus delight to dwell on His "words."

Since Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, has come down; and it is of the highest importance always to bear this in mind: for while He brings the precious things of Christ, in His sufferings and death, to our remembrance, He also shows us *things to come*. To refuse, therefore, to enter into the teaching of the prophetic Scriptures is to turn a deaf ear to what Christ Himself taught, and to declare that the office of the Holy Ghost, to show us 'things to come,' is unnecessary.

We must at the outset draw attention to the fact that this prophetic discourse is only fully recorded in Matthew's gospel. A fragment here and there may be found elsewhere; but the parables of the "wise and evil servants," "the ten virgins," "the talents," and so-called parable of "the sheep" and "the goats," are not found in any other part of Scripture. Those who are acquainted with the prominent purpose of each evangelist, would expect that things which have reference to Israel, or to the kingdom, would be found in Matthew. And why? Because Matthew gives us details of divine truth in connection with Jesus as Messiah. Here we see that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." His genealogy is given as Son of David, and Son of Abraham. The circumstance of Herod and all the people of Jerusalem being troubled at the birth of "the King of the Jews," the king's edict to massacre all the children under two years, and the flight of Mary and Joseph with the young child into Egypt, are only given in this gospel. Here also the so-called sermon on the mount, detailing the principles on which the kingdom was to be set up, is fully recorded, as well as the parables of "the kingdom of heaven." The words, "The kingdom of heaven," only occur in Matthew, where it is mentioned nearly thirty times. The expression, "End of the world" (age), and also the parable of the marriage supper, in which our Lord speaks of destroying the murderers and burning up their city, are recorded only by Matthew. The bribing of the soldiers by the chief priests about the resurrection, and many other particulars, bearing especially upon Jewish things and people, are only recorded by this evangelist. But we must notice that Matthew alone omits the ascension of our Lord;

for his business, as we have said, was to show Him especially in relation to the kingdom. We, therefore, find this evangelist concluding, by our Lord's commission to the eleven to disciple all nations, which we expect to be accomplished on earth by a faithful remnant of Jews, after the rapture of the Church ; and the Lord promises to be with them alway, unto the end of the age. It is no marvel then that in this gospel we find allusions to, and instruction concerning the Jewish remnant yet to come upon the scene. But while thus calling attention to the special business of this evangelist, it need not be said that there is much also for our instruction and profit.

It is worthy of notice, that in this gospel, though so remarkably Jewish in its character, we have allusions to the Church not found elsewhere ; but not until our Lord had been virtually rejected by the Jews. They had gone about to destroy Him, and He had pronounced them to be a wicked and adulterous generation, incurably bad. (Matt. xii. 14-45.) It is after this we find our Lord saying, "Upon this rock I *will* build my Church ;" and also afterwards He said, "Tell it unto the Church." But I repeat that these statements do not occur till after the hatred of the Jews had been brought out by their going about to destroy Jesus.

The end of the twenty-third chapter shows us our Lord formally taking leave of the Jews as their rejected Messiah. This He did in the most touching way. His loving heart most truly felt the exceeding solemnity of the occasion. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth

her chickens under her wings, and YE WOULD NOT!" Our Lord here felt Himself to be the rejected One—the Stone which the builders disallowed; and that His attitude of grace and mercy had been refused. He therefore adds the solemn words, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." They were given up to desolation and judgment, because of rejecting the Messiah; but not given up for ever. Hence our Lord says, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." He had called upon the sinful people to "repent." He had said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" but instead of repenting, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance." When, therefore, the people do repent, and are brought into that condition of soul to welcome their Messiah, saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," then, and not till then, will *they* see Him. This is simple enough. But it is important to bear in mind that here it is the Lord taking His farewell of the Jews, on account of their sinful rejection of Him, and giving *them* the hope of His coming to *them* again when they are brought to repentance. The true interpretation of what follows mainly depends on our clearly seeing this.

The Lord then leaves the temple. The disciples, however, call His attention to that building. But the sentence of One greater than the temple had gone forth, that their holy and beautiful house should be a scene of desolation. The Lord had left it. How could there be anything, therefore, but desolation? Can there be blessing where Christ is cast out? The people had rejected the Messiah, the One through whom all blessing must come, how could anything short of judgment

then follow? Therefore "Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." The blessed Lord had come in His Father's name, and they received Him not; and He knew that when another should come in his own name—the great deceiver and Antichrist—him they would receive. John had come with mourning and lamentation, neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and they said he had a devil; Jesus had come eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, publishing the glad-tidings of forgiveness of sins, and showing forth His power to bring in the kingdom, and they said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Having over and over again rejected Jesus and His testimony, and hated Him without a cause, He leaves the beautiful temple, and speaks of the judgments that must inevitably follow. Nor will the people of Israel be brought into their blessings in the land of promise until they have passed through the needed chastisement, and received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins. (Isa. xl. 2.) Then will they say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord;" and again, "O Jehovah, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isa. xii. 1.)

Our blessed Lord was sitting on the mount of Olives. It was a peculiarly affecting moment. His loving heart felt it deeply. His own favoured people given up to judgment, and the beautiful temple doomed to desolation, because they would not be blessed and sheltered under His outstretched wing, made it a very solemn point in their history. It was also a time of great sorrow of

heart to Him, who not long before had beheld the city and wept over it. We know, however, how truly these things were fulfilled, and that to this day Jerusalem is a city of poverty and wretchedness, literally lying in heaps, and trodden down of the Gentiles.

The disciples were evidently pondering the Lord's words. They therefore came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (or rather, age)?" Three questions are thus proposed. The first, alluding to the destruction of the temple, is not answered here; but the second and third points are gone into, and especially as to the end, or completion, of the age. The last questions are answered pretty much together, because the *coming* here referred to is not till the end—the Lord coming in manifested glory with His saints.

Though the destruction of Jerusalem is not taken up in this chapter, it is fully entered into in the twenty-first of Luke. It is remarkable that on both occasions—the siege and destruction of the city, and also the persecution under the man of sin—the Lord's counsel is that the faithful should flee to the mountains; and His tender sympathy flows out toward those who are with child, and those who have infants to care for, which would be serious hindrances to their flight. Still the two events are very different; and already eighteen hundred years have elapsed between them. The language too in the two chapters is different. In Matthew xxiv. the sign given for the immediate flight of the faithful is the desecration of the temple by an idol being placed there—the abomination spoken of by Daniel. Whereas in Luke xxi. the sign for fleeing to the mountains was

Jerusalem being compassed with armies, because then the speedy desolation of the city, and slaughter of the people, would be inevitable. From this the Lord certainly goes on to speak of His own personal appearing, when the faithful would know redemption, and stand before the Son of man; but the siege and destruction of the city were to take place long before. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (*vv.* 20-24.) It is well to notice that this discourse was an answer to the questions, when he had been speaking prophetically of the desolation of the temple, "When shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" (*v.* 7.) The sign He gave them, as we have seen, was Jerusalem being compassed with armies. There can be no doubt that this had its literal accomplishment in the destruction of the city by Titus, that the beautiful temple has been in ruins ever since, and that the beloved city is to this day being trodden down of the Gentiles.

THE END OF THE AGE.

The expression, "The end of the age," is found only in Matthew's gospel,* because no one who was ignorant of Jewish prophecies could enter into it. The Jews had been taught, especially by Daniel, of a time when the age would be fully run out, and Messiah's kingdom established. "The end of the age" might be the end of the condition of things in which Israel then stood, as under the old legal covenant, which would be succeeded by Messiah bringing them into the "new covenant." The famous prophecy of seventy weeks, recorded in Daniel ix., as to Daniel's people and the holy city, must run its course. We are told that the city and sanctuary shall be destroyed, but that *the end* thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. Messiah's being cut off and having nothing, took place after sixty-nine weeks; then we get another period to complete the age, the last or seventieth hebdomad or week, in which the abomination that maketh desolate is set up, until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon *the desolate*, or desolator (margin).

A Jew might also have learned from Jeremiah that the old legal covenant would come to an end, and be succeeded by a "new covenant," which Jehovah will make with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, in which there would be such blessing that all shall know Jehovah, from the least to the greatest. (Jer. xxxii. 31-34.) It was natural then to a Jew to look forward to "the end of the age;" and our Lord had previously called their attention to it, in His instructive

* In Hebrews ix. 26, it is not "age," but "ages." (See Greek.) .

parabolic discourse, in the thirteenth chapter. For obvious reasons we have no such subject given in any of the epistles in relation to the Church of God. But let us look a little further into what we are to understand by THE END OF THE AGE.

The rejection or cutting off of Messiah has postponed, if I may so say, the accomplishment of this seventieth week. Israel being set aside for the time as a people, and Christ having ascended into the heavens, the Holy Ghost is sent down to baptize into one body those who believe in the rejected Son of God; and until that body is complete, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, the Jews, in God's judicial dealing, will be for the most part under blindness, and Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

But there is another point of view in which Scripture bids us consider the end of the age. There is a line of truth called "the kingdom of heaven," very distinct from another line which treats of the Church of God, though both are painfully commingled as to practice and testimony. That is, that the form the kingdom now takes is not as it was in Solomon's day, nor as it will be in millennial times, but the kingdom in a mysterious form of which prophets did not prophesy. (Matt. xiii. 11.) A people on earth who own allegiance, professedly and outwardly at least, to One in the heavens—as when a man calls himself a Christian—characterizes the kingdom of heaven. We find that Jesus taught, in Matt. xiii., that this kingdom condition of things will go on to "the end of the age," when the Lord will come in judgment, and cast out of His kingdom them that offend and do iniquity.

There is also another line of truth which takes us on to "the end of the age," I mean the times of the Gentiles. Daniel gives us full instruction on this point. Four monarchies succeeding each other are there brought before us, terminating in ten kingdoms, and then at the end a stone cut out without hands falling upon the image in judgment, and becoming a great mountain, which fills the whole *earth*. All these different lines of instruction show us that "the end of the age" specially refers to things of earth, and not to the Church, and that, from Daniel's prophetic testimony, an instructed Jew would have been more or less familiar with the subject. Nor were the minds of the disciples whom our Lord addressed occupied with higher thoughts than the restoration of the kingdom—a time of blessing on the earth in connection with Israel's king. The confession of the two going to Emmaus, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," and also the question of the apostles, after our Lord's resurrection, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" plainly show what their thoughts and expectations were. (Luke xxiv. 21 ; Acts i. 6.)

An intelligent Jew, therefore, would have known from the prophets that a time would come when the age would be fully run out, and be followed by the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. Nothing could be nearer to the heart of a Jew than this hope. The questions proposed to our Lord embrace the two points—the end or completion of the age, and Messiah's coming, and both are connected in Old Testament prophecies. Our Lord, as we have noticed, had previously spoken of the end of the age, and now of His coming, and the disciples wanted further instruction upon both these points.

THE SIGN OF HIS COMING, AND OF THE END OF THE AGE.

When Jesus took His farewell of the nation, as we have observed, He gave hope of His coming, only in connection with the people's repentance; when, instead of going about to kill Him, they will welcome Him with joy, and say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." The disciples, accustomed as they were to think of signs, were anxious to know what the sign of this coming of which He had spoken would be; and hearing of the desolation that was at hand, naturally associated the thought in their minds with the end of the age. We can easily understand, therefore, what sorrow and disappointment must have filled their minds at being told that the temple would be a ruin, and that instead of the immediate restoration of the kingdom, the expected blessing would be postponed until the people repented.

It is clearly then the Lord's coming *to the Jews* that is here set forth, and *not* His coming *for us*; His coming *to the earth*, and not His coming to meet us *in the air*. It is very important to see this. The blessed Lord had been received by these disciples as the Messiah. They expected that He would presently set up the kingdom. They thought He would have redeemed Israel. Thoughts of the kingdom completely filled their minds; and though *afterwards*, at the descent of the Holy Ghost, they formed a part of the Church, the body of Christ, the platform on which they were *then* was that of the *kingdom*. The Church was not then revealed, not then formed; the mystery was still hid in God. (Eph. ii. 15; iii. 9.)

They must beware of being deceived by men. Our Lord therefore forewarns them, that a false Christ will be the great exhibition of the power of Satan. We know this will characterize the seventieth week. However much these principles have been, and still are, at work, their full accomplishment cannot be looked for till after the Church is gone. Paul saw the evil working in his day. He said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked (wicked one) be revealed . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan." (2 Thess. ii. 7-9.) Then the false Christ will come upon the scene, and many will be deceived. True it is that the name of Christ is already associated with much that is evil, but it is only tending towards the culminating point of this masterpiece of iniquity. However lamb-like the false Christ will appear, he will speak as a dragon, and be energized by Satan. He will not, like Jesus, come in his Father's name, but come in his own name, and deceive many. Our Lord thus, in replying to the disciples' questions, seems to look beyond the present time of the calling out of the Church, takes up the history of the Jews after the Church is gone, and gives the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. Thus we have a series of events characterizing the time of the end, and terminating in the Lord's coming again to earth (for His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives), when Israel shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." It is interesting to notice that this record of events corresponds with the opening of the seals in the Apocalypse; a class of judgments which we know will not come into action until the heavenly

saints are actually on seats or thrones in heaven (Rev. iv. 4). Our Lord therefore, recognizing the disciples who had asked these questions as representative of the faithful and godly Jews who will come upon the scene after the Church is gone, inspired with hope of the kingdom, begins by saying, "Take heed that no man deceive *you*. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and shall *deceive* many." He also told them that there would be *wars* and rumours of wars, and they were not to be troubled; but *the end*, that is, the end of the age, is NOT YET. There would also be *famines*, and *pestilences*, but these things will be only introductory to the deep and unparalleled sorrows which will follow. Now observe, that when these judgments shall have been put forth, according to the order of the first four seals of the Revelation, then, what the fifth seal tells us is next brought out; for those who shall then be the bearers of God's testimony, the publishers of "the gospel of the kingdom," will be put to death, as represented in Rev. vi. 9, 10 by the souls under the altar. "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and *shall kill you*; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." Observe, too, that this will be a time when iniquity shall abound, and false prophets will deceive many. Then comes in the promise of salvation to those who endure *unto the end*; a salvation of people bodily out of the great tribulation which will then come upon the earth, a salvation which those who yield to the deceivings of the beast will lose, while those who endure in patient faith will be brought through the fire, and into the promised blessing. But there is another thing; "this gospel of the kingdom," (mark, "this gospel of the kingdom!") which was preached by our Lord and the

twelve, must then be taken up again, and published throughout all the nations; not to the *κόσμος*, the world in its largest sense, but the *οικουμένη*, the civilized world—the same word that is used for the Roman earth when it is said, “All the world should be taxed”—and *then shall the end come*. Thus it is clear, that before the end of the age can come, the glad tidings of the kingdom must be thus published. *Now* we preach “the kingdom,” and testify “the gospel of the grace of God.” While we truly declare that all things were made by Christ and for Christ, and that all things are yet to be put in subjection under Him, we preach that he that believeth God’s testimony, as to Jesus crucified and risen, *is* delivered from the wrath to come, *has* passed from death unto life, and is united to Christ in the heavenlies by the gift of the Holy Ghost. But the gospel of the kingdom will be very different. It will announce the coming of the King to set up His kingdom, and bring in that reign on the earth which prophets have long spoken of, when “the *earth* shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. xi. 9); when *all the earth* shall be filled with the glory of the Lord (Num. xiv. 21), and when it shall be truly said, “O Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is thy name in *all the earth!*” (Ps. viii. 9.) It is important, then, to distinguish between the two testimonies, “the gospel of the kingdom” and “the gospel of the grace of God.” The gospel of the kingdom, when published by the twelve apostles, was limited to the cities of Israel (Matt. x. 5, 23); but it will yet be carried to the nations before the end of the age comes, and connected with suffering and martyrdom to those who preach it. It was always supposed to be connected with

suffering to those who bore the message, and by-and-by, as we see, it will be associated with betrayal, hatred, affliction, and death.

It may be that some will have difficulty in considering that the disciples are here addressed by our Lord as representative of the faithful Jews who shall come upon the scene after the calling out of the Church. But we must remember that the disciples had not yet been taken out of their position as Jews, and that the middle wall of partition had not been broken down till Christ was crucified. Besides, how otherwise could we understand such expressions as follow? "When *ye* shall see the abomination of desolation. . . . Pray *ye* that *your* flight be not in the winter, neither on the *Sabbath day*;" for, as a matter of fact, the disciples whom our Lord addressed actually fell asleep well-nigh two thousand years ago, and the abomination spoken of by Daniel the prophet has not yet been set up. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus was certainly not that, for this chapter tells us, that the Lord will be revealed from heaven *immediately after the tribulation of those days*. Moreover, as we have seen, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet is clearly set forth in connection with the man of sin, who has not yet come forth; nor do the Scriptures lead us to expect he will come till the Church is gone, however much the mystery of iniquity and the principles of lawlessness have been and still are at work, and rapidly preparing the way for him.

But further. Such language as, "If any man shall say unto *you*, Lo, *here* is Christ, or *there*," can hardly be conceived to be our Lord's instruction to us, who are set in the posture of waiting for Him from heaven, and

expect to be caught up to meet Him in the air. It surely would be no temptation to us to be told Christ was in this place or that. The soul that waits for the Lord Himself to descend from heaven refuses the thought; but to a Jew, who is taught by the prophets to expect the Messiah on earth, we can easily understand how the report that He had come, and was either in the desert, or in a secret place, might deceive. Another reason why they were not to be deceived by such a report is, that there would be the sign of His coming, the sign of the Son of man in heaven, introducing His advent to Israel, when, as we have observed, they will say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

The blessed Lord seems to have anticipated the difficulty many would find in understanding what is meant by the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet; for He added, "Whoso readeth let him understand." (v. 15.) But "the abomination" is defined; our Lord said it is that "spoken of by Daniel the prophet." This makes it clear; for there it is spoken of as arising in the midst of the last or seventieth week, in connection with the man of sin, that wicked one who is yet to be revealed. "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and *in the midst of the week* he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of *abominations* he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolator" [margin]. (Dan. ix. 27.) And again: "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up." (Dan. xii. 11.) This goes on to the *end of the age*—the completion of the seventieth week. We can understand that an intelligent Jew

would be conversant with *the time of the end*. Daniel is told to "shut up the words, and seal the book till *the time of the end*." It is also said to him, "Go thy way till *the end be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the *end of the days*." (Chap. xii. 4-13.)

Again, we read in Dan. ix. that seventy weeks are determined for the accomplishment of certain things concerning Daniel's people and their city. Looking at a day for a year, seventy weeks would mean four hundred and ninety years. This period is divided into seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks, making sixty-nine weeks, which takes us down to the death of the Messiah, who was cut off and had nothing. A week then, the seventieth, remains to be fulfilled. Between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks we have this present time, in which we know the calling, formation, and rapture of the Church must take place, and about which Daniel says nothing, because Daniel's people are the Jews, and his prophecy mostly about the times of the Gentiles. The seventieth week is therefore future, in the midst of which, or the end of three years and a half, the daily sacrifice will be taken away, and the abomination or idol set up. From this moment *the time of the end* is calculated. But our Lord said those days would be shortened, as if the power of the persecution would be so hot that "no flesh" would be saved, no godly Jew brought through it into his promised blessing on the earth. They will, therefore, be shortened. Our Lord gives the faithful, too, instruction for that time. Those who are in Judea are admonished to flee to the mountains; and so imperative and urgent is the step (for the frightful wickedness of the man of sin will be hastened with such rapidity, and the hatred to the faithful

be so intense), that he who is on the housetop is not to come down to take anything out of his house; or if a man be in the fields, he is to flee at once just as he is, and not to go to his home for his clothes. Nor could the Lord's tender heart have the dreadful picture before Him, without giving utterance to His sympathy with the faithful ones who will be thus obedient to His word at that time. He foresaw what great pain and difficulty would be connected with those who are with child, and those who are carrying their infants, in fleeing from the fiery persecution of this lawless one. The winter time, too, would increase the suffering; and a conscientious Jew (for such who fled would be) would feel limited to a sabbath-day's journey, if the time for fleeing should occur on the seventh day. This deepest time of sorrow, too, which earth ever knew, the Lord refers to with deep emotion. "Then," said He, "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (v. 21.) Daniel, speaking of the same time, says, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." He also refers to the remnant of Israel which will be brought out of it; for he adds, "At that time *thy people* shall be delivered, every one that shall be written in the book." (Dan. xii. 1.) Jeremiah says, "Alas! for that day is great, so that *none is like it*; it is even the time of *Jacob's trouble*" (observe, it is *Jacob's trouble*) "but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. xxx. 7.) And God's word will be fulfilled; for though the fiery persecution be unparalleled in earth's history, and the rage of this lawless one and his associates so great as to threaten an entire extermination of the faithful, yet He who is able to deliver His own will restrain the wrath of

man, and accomplish His own purposes. Jesus said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no *flesh* be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (v. 22.) Thus the elect, those whom Jehovah by the prophet calls "Israel mine elect," will be saved out of it; like Noah saved in the flesh, or like the children in the fiery furnace, sustained in the burning flame without the smell of fire attaching to them, and saved out of it as men in the *flesh*, as we have just seen alluded to by our Lord's words, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no *flesh* be saved; nevertheless for *the elect's sake* those days shall be shortened." Nothing can be clearer than the elect here being Jacob's children saved bodily out of what is emphatically called in scripture "the time of *Jacob's* trouble."

But there is another point. There have been times of great trouble on the earth, and each may have been supposed by some to be this great tribulation. As we are taught that there will be false Christs, false prophets, and great deceivers, who will work signs and wonders, and deceive many, there is one thing that will keep these "elect" from being deceived: they will know that Christ's coming will be open and visible, and not private. So here the blessed Lord admonishes them that if they hear it said that Christ is here or there, in the desert or in the secret chamber, they are not to believe it, and therefore not to go forth. Why? Because His coming to the earth will be public and manifested. Like an eagle pouncing upon a foul carcase, or like lightning flashing suddenly and vividly from east to west, so the coming of the Son of man will be. As we are elsewhere told, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him;" or as

our Lord witnessed to the Jewish high priest, "Hereafter ye shall *see* the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matt. xxvi. 64.) The nineteenth chapter of Revelation clearly shows us that when the Lord thus comes out of heaven in great power and glory, He will not be alone, but be followed by the armies of heaven. Yes, we shall be *with* Him then, having been previously caught up; for it is also written, that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear *with Him* in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

While unexampled sorrow and distress will characterize the great tribulation, yet many will be saved out of it. Not only an elect people of Israel, as we have seen, but "a great multitude, which no man can number, of *all nations*," will be brought to stand in joy and blessing before the throne of God, through the blood of the Lamb. "These are they which came out of (the) great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God," &c. (Rev. vii. 9-17.)

At the close of this period there will be a terrible commotion of the great powers; that is, everything that can be moved will be shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. (Heb. xii. 27, 28.) These commotions will precede the Lord's personal revelation in power and great glory. We read: "*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: and *then* shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great

glory." (*vv.* 29, 30.) Observe that "the sign" is connected with the manifested glory of the Lord Himself. There have been many conjectures about what we are to understand by "the sign." Some have thought that the solution is found in the tenth chapter of Revelation. There we are taught that when the Lord (symbolized by an angel) takes possession of the earth, by setting His right foot upon the sea, and His left foot on the earth, He is not only clothed with a cloud, and His face as it were the sun (expressive of the highest majesty), and feet as pillars of fire (descriptive of His almighty power in judgment); but we are told that *a rainbow was upon His head*, which surely is a token, or sign, that though He come to judge the world in righteousness, He still remembers His covenant with the earth and all flesh. (See Gen. ix. 11-16.) However this may be, it is clear that the sign will be at the instant of our Lord's appearing. For Jews on earth to look up, and see the Son of man in heaven, that Saviour whom they had despised coming in glory and power, will be a sign indeed. Then will our Lord's testimony before the high priest be fulfilled, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matt. xxvi. 64.) Then too will "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." (*v.* 30.) It will be a terrible time of anguish and mourning for those who are then on the earth, and they shall not escape. Then "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (Rev. i. 7.) The nineteenth chapter of the Revelation gives us most affecting details of the terrible judgment upon the living when

the Lord thus comes out of heaven with His saints. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew we have simply the power and glory of Christ, and His dealings specially with His elect of Israel, in answer to the questions as to the end of the age, and the sign of His coming to the earth, when they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF HIS ELECT.

Angels will then be sent forth with the great sound of a trumpet, to gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (v. 31.) The meaning of these words becomes plain enough when we turn to the Old Testament Scriptures. Our Lord seems to have referred to Isaiah; for there we find it predicted that *a great trumpet shall be blown*, the effect of which will be to collect the remaining elect of the tribes of Israel ready to perish, and bring them to worship Jehovah in Jerusalem. "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day that *the great trumpet shall be blown*, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." (Isa. xxvii. 12, 13.)

It is important to notice that this action our Lord speaks of is the ministry of angels, and that it is simply a gathering of people from one part of the earth to another, that they may worship in the holy city; consequently there is no mention of resurrection, or of persons being changed in a moment, as will take place when the Lord descends into the air for us. Again, we may notice that these elect are gathered from "the four

winds," which is a Jewish form of speech, and applied by the prophet Zechariah to those whom God has scattered—"I have spread you abroad as the *four winds of the heaven*, saith the Lord." (Zech. ii. 6.) It is clear that such language cannot be applied to the church of God; for however much it is divided through our sin and folly, yet it has never been scattered to the four winds; which, we presume, is a figure of the decided way in which God in judgment has scattered His earthly people northward, southward, eastward, and westward, so that we cannot know where they are, and no one will be able to gather them again but He who has spread them abroad. The expression, "from one end of heaven to the other," is also a similar phrase to what we find in the Mosaic writings. "Ask *from one side of heaven unto the other*," is certainly a form of speech which does not refer to the heavens, but to an extent on earth which is unlimited. (Deut. iv. 32.) Again, "If any of thine be driven out unto the *utmost parts of heaven*, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee," seems to refer to this very time. (Deut. xxx. 4.) We thus see how an intelligent Jew would understand, from the form of speech used in the ancient Scriptures, such phrases as "from the four winds," and "from one end of heaven to the other." Those who are in Christ, and have the Spirit of God, scarcely need to be informed how totally inapplicable such language is to those who compose the church of God, and are made partakers of the heavenly calling. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find no such expressions used in the epistles, where we have the Christian's hope fully and clearly taught. May we then patiently wait for God's Son from heaven!

We have said that the "elect" here spoken of, to be gathered by angelic ministry at our Lord's appearing, are the remaining elect of the tribes of Israel. Those who carefully read the Old Testament Scriptures are aware that, up to the completion of Solomon's reign, the twelve tribes of Israel, the literal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were one kingdom. In consequence, however, of Solomon's idolatry, God judicially came in; and from the days of Rehoboam, his successor to the throne, ten tribes formed the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam their king, and Judah and Benjamin continued as the kingdom of Judah. The two kingdoms have never since been united. Samaria was the chief town of the ten tribes, and Jerusalem was the capital of Judah.

Both kingdoms sinned greatly. Because of the frightful and continual idolatry of the people of Israel, God gave them into captivity to the king of Assyria, who carried them away into his own country. (2 Kings xvii. 6, 20.) After this, because of the dreadful sins and idolatry of Judah, God gave them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, who carried them, and all the vessels of the temple, to Babylon. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16-20.)

There was, however, after about seventy years, according to the word of Jeremiah, a partial return of the *two* tribes from Babylon to Jerusalem, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the details of which we find in their inspired writings. Their descendants were in the land in the days of our Lord. A few believed unto salvation. As a people, however, they "received Him not;" but for His love gave Him hatred, and would not rest till He had been cruelly put to death on the cross. They sadly fulfilled the word of Jesus, "I am come in

my Father's name, and ye receive me not;" even as their descendants will yet receive the false Christ, as Jesus also said, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." (John v. 43.) It was those tribes who, because of their deep sin in rejecting their Messiah, so suffered at the terrible destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and have been scattered among all nations, a by-word, and a reproach, to this day. It is these tribes, who, having been restored to their land, and having received the false Christ, will have to go through the unparalleled tribulation wherein two-thirds will be cut off and die, and one-third will be brought through the fire and led into the promised blessings of the kingdom. The Psalms, and prophets, speak of both "the righteous" and "the ungodly," that will be in these days of trouble. In the Revelation we have the martyred remnant, who in faithfulness will lose their hoped-for earthly blessings, given a place in heaven on the sea of glass (chap. xv.); and the spared remnant with the Lamb on mount Zion. In the time of future blessing on earth, both Judah and Israel will be united. "I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be two kingdoms any more at all." (Zech. xiii. 9; Isa. xi. 12; Ezek. xxxvii. 19-22.)

The return of the *ten* tribes, who are called "the *outcasts* of Israel" as distinguished from "the *dispersed* of Judah," will be in a different manner. They have not returned, like Judah and Benjamin did in the days of Ezra, but they will yet be placed by Jehovah in their own land, according to abundant testimony of the prophets. "The children of Israel shall abide many

days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without a teraphim: AFTERWARD shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king; and shall fear Jehovah and His goodness in the latter days." (Hosea iii. 4, 5.) Ezekiel tells us that they will be brought out of *various countries* into their own land by divine power, and in a state of unbelief, after having been dealt with by Jehovah, and purged of the rebels. "Wherefore say unto *the house of Israel*. . . . As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you under the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and THEY shall not enter into the land of Israel: and YE shall know that I am Jehovah. . . . In mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, WHEN I bring you out from the

people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, WHEN I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And THERE shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, WHEN I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. xx. 30-44.) From this passage we learn, (1) That the house of Israel, or the ten tribes, will be brought by divine power out of the countries whither they have been scattered. (2) That before they enter the land they will be purged of the rebels which are among them. (3) That when brought back into God's holy mountain, and not before, they will serve Jehovah, and He will accept their offerings; while there, too, will they manifest repentance, for they will loathe themselves in their own sight. (4) The heathen will then know that they are the people of Jehovah.

We shall now quote from the same prophet to show further: (1) That when they were among the heathen they profaned the holy name of Jehovah. (2) That Jehovah for His own name sake will gather them out from among the heathen and from all countries, and bring them into their own land. (3) Being restored to their land in an unconverted state, THEN they will be cleansed from all their filthiness, have a new heart given them and the Spirit of God put within them. (4) Thus restored and

blessed, they will repent, will remember their past ways, and loathe themselves in their own sight. (5) The land, which has so long been desolate, will be so changed, that some shall say it is like the garden of Eden. "I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord God, WHEN I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. THEN shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause

you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." (Ezek. xxxvi. 23-35.)

We are further told by the same prophet: (1) That the house of Israel went into captivity because of their trespasses; (2) that God hid His face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; (3) that He will bring again the captivity of His people, have mercy upon *the whole house of Israel*; (4) that He will gather them out of *their enemies' lands*, and leave none of them any more there; (5) neither will He hide His face from them any more, when He has poured out His Spirit upon them. "And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions, have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own

land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." (Ezekiel xxxix. 23-29.)

Nor is the New Testament silent on this subject. We have noticed our Lord's teaching as to the Jews, and also of the great tribulation through which they will pass in consequence of their deep sin in having rejected their Messiah. He also spoke prophetically of the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus, and the great sufferings they would then pass through. (Luke xxi.) But Paul is inspired to teach us that "all Israel shall be saved." While, for the present, judicial blindness or hardness in part is happened to Israel (in part, because some now believe the gospel and are saved), which will continue until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, yet the time will arrive when "all Israel," not a part, but "all Israel, shall be saved." According to Ezekiel there will be a kind of national resurrection. Most clearly, however, we are told that this will not be by the preaching of the gospel; for "as concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes;" and then we are told it will be by the personal return of our Lord Himself. Quoting from Isaiah, he says, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I SHALL TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. xi. 25-29.) Nothing can more plainly show that by divine power they will be restored to their own land in unbelief, and will be converted, not as we are by believing, but by seeing the

Saviour at His coming. Like Thomas, they are now saying they will not believe unless they see; but, like him also, when they do see Him, they will say, "My Lord, and my God." Paul no doubt referred to this when he spoke of himself as an abortive, as one born out of due time—born anew by a *sight* of Christ glorified—as Israel as a people will be by-and-by. He was therefore like one born before the time; for we know that in this way "a nation will be born at once." (Isa. lxvi. 8.) This certainly refers to "all Israel;" for those who are dispersed of Judah must yet be gathered back into their own land as well as the outcasts of Israel—both, too, in connection with the day of the Lord. The Lord who has once recovered His people from Babylon, will set His hand the second time to recover them from various lands and islands, and by miraculously drying up the Egyptian sea, make a way for His people's return. "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. . . . And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be

an highway for the remnant of His people which shall be left, from Assyria ; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." (Isa. xi.)

The prophet Jeremiah also shows that at that time all Israel will be restored, and brought into a new and everlasting covenant relationship with Jehovah. He says, "Lo, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will bring again the captivity of my people *Israel and Judah*, saith Jehovah : and I will make them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." And, to leave no doubt that both kingdoms are included at this time, it is added, "And these are the words that Jehovah spake concerning Israel, and concerning Judah." (Chap. xxx. 3, 4) Again, "At that time, saith Jehovah, will I be the God of *all the families* of the house of Israel. Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with *the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah*. This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah : for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah : for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Chap. xxxi. 31-34.) This is quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews, to show the future blessedness of the nation of Israel in chap. viii., and to show us, though we are not under covenant, that *now* we have the special blessings of it, through grace, and much more. (Chap. x.)

Though at this moment they have no nationality, they will then, saith the Lord, be "a nation before me for ever." It is quite a mistake to suppose that the gospel now preached will convert the whole world, or the Jewish nation. It is certain that the world's blessing will be brought in through the nation of Israel; for "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. xxvii. 6.) It is clear that before Israel repents, and can say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39), they will not *see* their Messiah; and it is also clear that before Israel is restored, and brought into their promised blessings in the land of their fathers, there cannot be the restitution spoken of by all the prophets, when the Lord shall have His rightful place, and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 9.)

We regard, then, the gathering together of His elect by the ministry of angels, to be the bringing back of those who, at our Lord's appearing, are left of the outcasts of Israel, to worship Jehovah in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

The Lord having answered the disciples' questions, at least two of them, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" now gives two illustrations—one of a fig tree, and the other of the days of Noah.

THE FIG TREE.

In the parable of the fig tree, the Lord reminds them of summer being not far off when leaves begin to shoot forth. This is a fact appreciable to the senses. We

walk by *faith*; but they will be guided by *events*. "When ye shall *see* these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." (Matt. xxiv. 32, 33.) These things would occur sufficiently plain to assure godly Jews of the near coming of the Lord *to the earth*. They were therefore to watch the progress of events, and mark the signs of the times. This was what their questions involved as to "the sign" of His coming, and of "the end of the age," when the Jews should say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." The people of Israel had been accustomed to look for signs, and they often had them. It was their mistake when Jesus came, and it still is, for we are told that "the Jews require a sign." "We," on the contrary, "walk by faith, not by sight," and we know it to be our fitting posture to "wait for God's Son from heaven," as those who are in Him, already seated in Him in heavenly places. The remnant of godly Jews, who come upon the scene after we are gone, will doubtless understand, when they *see* these events occurring, that the end of the age and *their* redemption are near.

THE GENERATION NOT TO PASS AWAY.

The Lord also assures them that this generation—this race of Jews, in their moral characteristics,—will not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled. And it is remarkable, while some tribes of the earth have passed away, and become wholly untraceable, yet the Jews remain a distinct race and rejecters of Christ unto this day. That the Lord, in thus speaking, did not mean that the identical people then living on the earth would be in existence until the fulfilment of this prophecy is very clear, for proof of which we need only point

to chap. xii. 39-45. When there speaking of the unclean spirit, and referring to the future of this people, when the spirit of idolatry would return, and take to itself seven other spirits more wicked than itself—receiving the antichrist—He adds, "*Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*" This shows that our Lord applies the phrase "this generation" to those who do not come upon the scene for at least 1800 years after. It leaves no doubt that our Lord did not speak of "this generation" as actually referring to persons then alive, but to the Jews as a Christ-hating race, who, notwithstanding their chastisements and scattering, should continue until all the judgments predicted should have their accomplishment. To this day, they despise and hate the name of Jesus. The word of the Lord is infallible. The strongest and most lasting thing in God's created universe will change; but God's truth remains the same. Our Lord insisted on this, and that too in connection with these prophecies. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (v. 35.)

THE DAYS OF NOAH.

The other illustration is the days of Noah; and our Lord prefaces it by referring to the ignorance in which all are left, as to the precise time when He will be revealed from heaven. While the intelligent might gather general instruction as events became fulfilled, the day and hour were not revealed, not even to angels, though they would accompany the Lord in His public manifestation: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (v. 36.) As to the world, the day will come upon it as

a thief in the night, so sudden and unexpected will it be. They will be rather priding themselves on their attainments; "for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them," &c. It was like this in Noah's time. They heeded not the preacher's testimony. The building of the ark seemed only a strange incident in the world's history. They attended unmoved to their daily pursuits, necessary duties, and matters of present comfort. They were deaf to God's voice. They hearkened not to His word. They perceived not His ways; they were therefore in culpable ignorance. "They knew not," and they wished to be ignorant. Like many now, they did not care to know God's mind; they are willingly ignorant. Hence it must be that the day of the Lord will come upon them as a thief in the night. The Lord will be entirely unexpected by them. Hence the Lord likens His coming from heaven to the days of the antediluvians: "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (*vv.* 37-39.) They *knew* when it was too late. When the flood came, and Noah was safe in the ark, then they *knew*; but not before. "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be!" How very solemn is the parallel! Men attending to the necessaries, and comforts, and business of life, and yet so refusing God's testimony, as to be ignorant of the solemn reality that Jesus is soon coming from heaven to judge the world in righteousness. But so it

is. We see exactly this condition of things; and indifferentism, with all its sad, yet, it may be, quiet accompaniments, becoming more and more mature. Not indifferentism to useful *things*, but carelessness as to *God's* truth, *God's* testimony for the times—unconcerned, it may be, as to the fact that Christ will soon be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to execute judgment on the ungodly. Instead, then, of Christ finding the world converted, it is positively taught here by our Lord Himself that He will find it in antediluvian carnal security, ignorance and unbelief, the measure of iniquity full, and ripe for the outpouring of divine judgment.

The subject here, as we have endeavoured to show, not being the Lord's coming *for* us, but *with* us, to execute judgment on the living, and to bless a people in the earth, as in Noah's days; the judgment of the flood is used by our Lord as a suitable and striking illustration: "*As the days of Noe were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.*" There is no allusion to the translation of Enoch *before* the judgment came. But our Lord having thus stamped the days of Noah as a type of His coming in flaming fire to judge, nothing can be plainer than that Enoch illustrates the translation of the heavenly saints to meet the Lord in the air, and that the silence about him is exactly in keeping with the instruction of the chapter. And what is still more striking, we find the separation that took place in Noah's day specially referred to here, which we know will precisely correspond with what the Lord will do when He comes in the clouds of heaven *with* His saints. As in the flood it was the wicked *He took away*, and brought His elect through the judgment into *blessing on the earth*, so the Lord will take the wicked away, cut them

off in judgment, and cause the blessed ones of Israel to go into the millennial earth. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall *be taken*, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall *be taken*, and the other left." (vv. 40, 41.) It is the Lord introducing the promised time of blessing in the earth, taking *the bad away, casting out them which do iniquity*, and leaving a people blessed *in the earth*. When the Lord comes *for us* the action is precisely opposite. Like Enoch, the blessed ones will be taken away—translated, caught up to meet the Lord in the air—and the wicked left behind for judgment. Ours is indeed a blessed hope. We may well say—

"Then shine, Thou 'Bright and Morning Star,'
 Dispel the dreary gloom;
 O take, from sin and grief afar,
 Thy blood-bought people home!"

The Lord Jesus, as we have seen, is coming upon men as a thief in the night; and though the solemn testimony of the Lord's revelation from heaven may have been often heard, still, to the unbeliever, the event will be as sudden and unexpected as the flood was in the days of Noah. The Lord therefore adds this practical exhortation: "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (v. 42.) So totally unprepared will men be for this most solemn moment, that just when they are saying, "Peace and safety, sudden destruction will come upon them." (1 Thess. v. 3.) The illustration that follows is that of a man expecting the thief to come to break up his house, and therefore watching to hinder it. "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and not

have suffered his house to be broken up." (v. 43.) The point, therefore, is of great practical importance to the faithful who will then be living upon the earth. It will be well with those who are then found watching and waiting for their Messiah; for He will bring them into their long-looked-for blessing. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (v. 44.)

CHRISTENDOM DURING CHRIST'S ABSENCE.

We now come to what has more direct reference to Christendom. There is a remarkable change both in the instruction and illustrations. Not that we have the Church in its unity; for, as we have before noticed, that was not then revealed. But we have the "household," and the history of individuals bearing the name of Christ on the earth—great principles applying to this time. The parables of the servants, the virgins, and the talents, show us in measure, but very strikingly, the history and the results of the profession of Christianity. We will now look a little at each of them.

THE PARABLE OF THE SERVANTS.

Here we have the "faithful and wise servant" and the "evil servant" contrasted. What characterizes the "faithful" is his being heartily taken up with the Lord's interests. The Lord's household, therefore, is the sphere where the affections and energies are exercised, and true attachment to the Master is shown forth. Hence he cares for the real need of the household during the Lord's absence by giving them "meat in due season." This is so well-pleasing to the Lord, that when He cometh such will be abundantly rewarded: "He shall make him ruler

over all His goods." It is not only faithful love to Christ to care for His sheep and lambs during His absence, but the only "wise" path. By-and-by it will be seen how foolish it was to have done otherwise.

The "evil servant" is far different. That he bears the name of Christian, and traffics in the things of Christianity, is true; but where is his *heart*? Does he care for the household? Does he feed them with meat in due season? How could he, if his heart was not right with the Lord? He may hold the outline of doctrine, see the coming of the Lord, and be orthodox in other points; but he held that Christ was not coming yet, and therefore he went on with the world. This is very solemn. The root of all was saying in *his heart*, "My Lord delayeth His coming." He did not give up the profession of being the Lord's servant, but he was not desiring, nor looking for, Christ; hence he took an antagonistic place to the true servants, and associated with the world. He said in *his heart*, "My Lord delayeth His coming," and we find connected with this that he began "to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." It does not contemplate his getting drunk, but there was no practical separation unto the Lord; there was therefore a choosing of the world's society—eating and drinking *with* the drunken. The result we might expect. He is judged accordingly, and ranked with hypocrites and unbelievers. Suddenly and unexpectedly (alas, how solemn!) he is cut off. "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now we ask, does not this parable read deeply solemn lessons to our hearts? It strikingly reminds us of an old sentence—"The Lord looketh on the *heart*." It is one thing to see the Lord's coming as a doctrine in the Bible, and another to be hoping and waiting for Him. The walk and ways show where the *heart* is. Christ has bought us with the priceless value of His own most precious blood, and we are His. The wise and faithful know and feel this. What interest, then, can they find in society which shuts Him out? How revolting the idea that one of His should seek it! Who on earth can be so dear to the heart of those who are in Christ as His members? "We love Him," says the apostle John, "because He first loved us . . . and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." It must be so. To be occupied with Christ, abiding in Him, is the alone power of fruit-bearing, the only source of real happiness and strength. Then we naturally, if I may so speak, fall into our right place. The heart filled with His love, and knowing the comfort of His presence, finds its interests and joys alone with Him, and knows nothing brighter than the sure hope of soon seeing Jesus, and being with Him where He is. Such, too, prove that Christ is all, and go through the wilderness singing with melody in the heart—

" My God ! I am Thine,
What a comfort divine ;
What a blessing to know
That my Jesus is mine.

" My Jesus to know,
And feel His love flow ;
'Tis life everlasting,
'Tis heaven below."

THE TEN VIRGINS.

Many thoughts have been expressed about this parable, and very different interpretations have been given. Those who have not seen the Scripture truth of the Lord's coming as the believer's hope, and not knowing how to understand it otherwise, have taught that the Bridegroom's coming is death, or judgment; while some who have accepted the doctrine of the second coming, have missed the true force of the parable, by trying to refer it to the Jewish remnant. And of late some have endeavoured to deduce from it the very erroneous doctrine, that all the virgins are real Christians; that the practically faithful only will be taken to be with Christ at His coming; and that the others, though finally saved, will be in chastisement for their unfaithfulness, brought through the great tribulation. Let us see what warrant there is from Scripture for these ideas.

In the first place, this parable cannot set before us the popular notion of the Lord's coming for His people in death, because all who are removed in this parable are taken away at once—all that were ready: "They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut." (Matt. xxv. 10.) This is not the case with believers dying. All do not die at the same time; we know that daily facts are opposed to such a thought. It must therefore have another meaning. Besides, death is not spoken of in Scripture as Christ coming to us, much less as the Bridegroom coming; but that when we die we go to Him—"depart and be with Christ;" it is therefore said "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." It is quite unaccountable how true Christians can imagine that watching for the Lord's

coming should mean watching for death ; and yet who does not know that one of the commonest selections of Scripture for a funeral address, by many in the present day, is the thirteenth verse : " Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Where is there a line of Scripture which shows that the Lord's coming is connected with the believer's death ?

Nor is there any ground for regarding this parable as setting before us the so-called day of judgment, and for this simple reason, not one person in this parable is judged. Besides, in the judgment of the " great white throne," every wicked person who has died is raised again, and the action is entirely confined to the wicked dead ; whereas in the parable we are considering it is exactly the opposite : the wicked are untouched, it is simply the " wise"—" they that were ready"—who are removed. Is it possible there can be anything more thoroughly opposed to the thought then, that the parable of the ten virgins describes the day of judgment ? Surely it is not judgment we have here, but the activity of Divine love. Christ is evidently presented to us as " the Bridegroom," satisfying the desires of His heart in receiving to Himself the objects of His affection.

The idea that the Jewish remnant is here set forth is entitled to more respect, though a little consideration will show that it cannot for a moment be sustained. Their hope will not be Christ as Bridegroom, but Christ as King ; and that not to remove them to heaven, but to come and establish them on the earth, cut off their enemies in judgment, and reign. Again, they will be too much oppressed and persecuted to have false ones in association with them, or to slumber and sleep while

looking for their Deliverer. Further, the action of the Lord then will be entirely opposite to the instruction of this parable; for He will separate the evil-doers from the remnant of Israel, and when He arises as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings to Israel, the day shall burn as an oven, and the wicked shall be trodden down, and they shall be ashes under the soles of their feet. Thus the words of the prophet Isaiah will be fulfilled—"Zion shall be redeemed with judgment." "The day of *vengeance* is in mine heart, and the year of my *redeemed* is come." (Isaiah i. 27; lxiii. 4.)

The modern doctrine that the ten virgins are all real Christians, and that only part of them, and that because they were faithful, are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, cannot be too severely censured. Not only is it at variance with almost every fundamental principle of the Church of God, but opposed to some of the simplest and plainest instructions of Divine truth. The Church being a body—one body—all the members united to their living Head in heaven by the Holy Ghost—is the idea conceivable that part of this body can be glorified with Christ, being severed from the rest? Besides, will the Bridegroom come and take to the marriage a part of His Bride—a portion of that one Church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself? Impossible. Are we not told that He now nourisheth and cherisheth her, and that His purpose is to present her—not a part of her—to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? Are not five declared to be foolish? and is not their unbelief most manifest?

Nothing should more awaken our suspicion than finding persons building a grave doctrine entirely on parabolic interpretation. Who does not know that a parable

generally presents some main line of instruction, rather than a minute doctrinal discourse? It is quite true that Scripture says, "To them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28); but are not those set in contrast with another class who are appointed to death and judgment? And is not the Holy Ghost here speaking of what will be also true of the faithful Jews? And can there be a believer now, a soul who has tasted the redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus, that does not in some sense look for Christ, however beclouded his hope may be by false teaching? Is there a heart that knows Christ to be precious that is not assured that its perfect satisfaction can only be to see Christ, and to be like Christ? But what is the plain teaching of Scripture on the point? Will any that are Christ's, however feeble or faltering, be left behind when He comes into the air with a shout? Assuredly not. As to the order of the resurrections, we are told that "Christ is the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." Mark the Divine statement—"they that are Christ's." (1 Cor. xv. 23.) Can anything be more conclusive? Again, we are told "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and *the dead in Christ*"—observe, "*the dead in Christ*," not the most faithful of those who are in Christ, but "THE DEAD IN CHRIST"—"shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain" (who are the "we" but all the saints that will be then living on the earth?—not a part of them) "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." (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.)

Surely nothing more is needed to show how utterly unscriptural is this modern interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins. Like other false doctrines, it is seldom held without other things equally or perhaps more destructive; and this brief exposure of it should be enough to teach us the vast importance of searching the plain testimonies of Scripture in order to arrive at a just conclusion as to what the counsels of God really are. That we should be faithful to the Lord during His absence is most surely due to Him, and becoming to us; and that He will not be unmindful, when He comes, of the smallest service rendered to His members, or wrought for His name's sake, the Scriptures abundantly teach; for He says, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

The subject is the kingdom of heaven—"Then shall the kingdom of heaven," &c. The expression, "kingdom of heaven," is peculiar to Matthew. We have therefore only to look through the passages in which it is found to gather its true meaning. It is generally descriptive of Christendom, including all professing Christians, whether true or merely nominal. Hence we have in "the kingdom of heaven" wheat and tares, good and bad fish, those with and without a wedding garment, and, in the parable before us, wise virgins and foolish. We have not here the church looked at in its unity as one body, but Christianity as found in the earth. It sets forth the course of those who bear Christ's name during His absence, and shows the real state of things when He comes again. The context has occupied us with the Lord's commendation of the "faithful and wise servant" when He comes, and shows that the "evil

servant," a nominal professor, must have his portion with the hypocrites and unbelievers. Hence this parable begins with "then," and treats of the state of Christianity in the earth when the Bridegroom comes, and the separation that must necessarily occur at that time between the true and false, the wise and foolish.

Profession is alike in all. Each takes a lamp. All pretend to be virgins, pure and chaste in affection and desire towards Christ, and to go forth to meet Him. All who call themselves Christians own, verbally at least, the cleansing power of His blood, and profess the hope of being with Him by-and-by. Hence the regular observance of the so-called sacrament, and the general performance of funeral ceremonials. It is very awful; but, alas! how true it is that many are so blinded and deceived. The Lord's words are, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." (Matt. xxv. 1, 2.) Thus Christianity began.

The next verses show the characteristics of the virgins. "Taking oil" or "no oil" made the difference. The omission of oil was fatal. The possession of oil was vital. The wise knew this, and they had oil not only in their lamps, but they had a resource for replenishing whenever needed. "They that were foolish took their lamps, but took *no oil* with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." (vv. 3, 4) "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His," is a plain and unmistakable announcement. A Christless soul is a lifeless soul. "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." To them who now obey the gospel, and thus receive Christ as their Saviour, God

gives His Holy Spirit. Hence we read, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iii. 26 ; iv. 6.)

What a solemn contrast there is between the wise and foolish virgins. How imperative it is that every individual who professes to be a Christian should most certainly have *all* his hopes based upon the finished work of Christ, should know Christ at God's right hand as the object of faith, as his life, righteousness, and peace, and have the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. It is one thing to have Bible knowledge, and to possess clear outlines of doctrine ; but it is another thing to receive Christ as the Saviour whom God has sent, to credit the testimony of God's word, that believing in Him we have forgiveness of sins, are children of God, and are justified from all things. It is easy for any one to call himself a Christian, and to pass among a crowd of others for a Christian ; but to trust in the already accomplished work of Jesus, to know Him at God's right hand as the soul's refuge and rest, to have the Holy Ghost, and to love God because He first loved us, these characterize every true Christian. What an amazing difference, then, there is between a mere professor and a real Christian ! How the consideration of this should stir our hearts to earnestness, and quicken us with unwearied love to those around ! How clearly the parable shows, that many will seal their eternal doom by trafficking in mere outward religiousness, the heart all the while deceiving itself, and refusing God's infallible testimony to the finished work of Christ ; consequently such do not receive the gift of

the Holy Ghost! What folly! Could any course be more unwise than caring for a little temporary credit among men, and, when too late, finding it powerless to deliver them from the wrath to come. What blindness and self-sufficiency characterize such professors! Foolish virgins indeed!

How very different are the "wise virgins." They reckon on nothing of self. Their hearts are truly set on Christ. With them it is not merely *profession*, but *possession*. They have received the Saviour whom God has sent. Their hopes are entirely built on Him. They know His love; they have received the Holy Spirit; they are well provided with oil; they know Christ glorified as their life; they are gone forth to meet One whom they love. It is Christ they are expecting to see and be with, and they have already received "the earnest" of glory. "After ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." (Eph. i. 13, 14.) What security this gives, and what confidence it warrants!

But many a true Christian has been a failing Christian. Many have given way to self-gratification, and become weary of watching. The night soon began to feel long, and the true hope and expectation of the Lord's return to fade. Spiritual decline may be very gradual, but not the less real on that account. It may, too, be very general, and yet, alas, how true! We know it has been so. If Church history be correct, the hope of the Lord's coming very soon lost its power. Hence we are told, that "while the Bridegroom tarried, they *all* slumbered and slept." Wise and foolish were alike involved in this forgetfulness of the Bridegroom's coming. At

first there was real earnestness of desire for His return : for we read that the Thessalonian believers "turned to God, from idols, to serve the living and true God, and *to wait for His Son from heaven*, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." It is impossible to mistake the real character of this hope, or to doubt that it is the personal coming of the risen and ascended Jesus whom they so ardently desired and waited for. But all grew weary of watching, and "all slumbered and slept."

The long silence, however, was broken. The culpable quiet of the slumberers was disturbed. A soul-stirring sound was heard. "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom ; go ye out to meet Him." And the cry was effectual. A general awakening followed. All were aroused. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." It is not well to speak positively, perhaps, as to when this part of the parable had its accomplishment ; but it is very remarkable, that, until about fifty years ago, the hope of the Lord's coming seemed to be almost lost. This, too, had been almost universally the case for many centuries. When about that time this "blessed hope" was earnestly set forth by many of the Lord's servants in different parts of the world, and especially in this kingdom and on the Continent, a decided awakening took place. Since then, where the testimony of the Lord's personal return has been proclaimed, thousands, and perhaps tens of thousands, have been aroused ; and, with fresh-girded loins and trimmed lamps, have found it their heartfelt joy to go forth to meet the Lord. It is remarkable, too, that when the hope of the Lord's coming has been faithfully set forth, the finished work of Christ, the security and standing

of the believer as accepted in the Beloved have been preached in connection with it; for it is evident, if I have the present possession of everlasting life, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, if I am a child of God, if I have passed from death unto life, and am complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power, I can wait only for glory. If our citizenship is now in heaven, what can we look for but the Lord Jesus Christ to come and change our vile body, and take us up to meet Him in the air? We refer to this, because it is clear that Scripture does connect the present standing and security of the believer with this "blessed hope." On the other hand, as we might expect, Satan has taken certain parts of prophetic truth, and turned them to his own evil purposes, by associating with them certain pernicious doctrines; and in this way uses prophecy to endeavour to undermine some of the most important parts of divine revelation. The perfection and the glory of Christ Himself make everything manifest. Prophetic events, or any other doctrine, may amuse the activities of the human intellect, but the heaven-born soul is taught that Christ is all. It is to Christ Himself he looks, from Him he draws, Him he seeks to please, with Him he sympathizes, and for Him he waits; and when He is really the heartfelt enjoyment of the soul, it is easy and happy to be subject to His word and Spirit. Such an one cannot stray far from the truth.

But to return. In every period of this time of grace there have been, doubtless, true Christians, who held fast and enjoyed the doctrines of divine grace, and have been filled with love for the truth and for the service of Christ. But going forth to meet the Bridegroom in the energy of bridal love, is that which marks the wise in this

parable, and distinguishes those who have heartily received the testimony of His coming.

Observe that though the arousing spoken of in this parable is first of all general, it soon becomes connected with inevitable separation. The true devotedness of the wise virgins to the Lord Himself, carried on as it was with faith and hope, soon made manifest the awful fact, that there were among them those who had "no oil." *Their* destitution was apparent to themselves as well as to others. The consequence was, they were compelled to halt, they were unable to keep pace with the faithful ones; and separation necessarily ensued. It is a most solemn and instructive lesson. Were it better understood, we should not find true Christians complaining of their being associated with so many they feared were only mere professors, and had "no oil" in their lamps; for a few faithful steps on their part in the narrow path of faith, and love, and hope, from personal love to Christ, would at once leave such far behind. It is the unfaithfulness of Christians that has given the opportunity to the enemy to make false professors. "*While men slept* the enemy came, and sowed tares." It is a searching and important point, and demands the most solemn consideration before the Lord as to the path we are each personally pursuing. As long as *all* were slumbering and sleeping, it was easy enough for those who had "no oil" to be found in ostensible association with those who had. But when the heart was aroused towards Christ and glory; and faith and hope, in obedience to the divine cry, gave impetus and power to those who were really true to the Lord to go forth to meet Him, then the awful discovery became apparent, that many of those found in their ranks were mere pro-

fessors—had lamps, but no “oil.” And surely it is clear now, that nothing so effectually separates the Lord’s “little flock” from mere professors as being practically stirred up to own and follow the Lord at all costs, in blessed hope of soon having every desire of the soul satisfied by seeing Him at His coming.

The lamps, however, soon went out. The need of oil was manifest. The one question now is, Where can a supply be had? Alas! what ignorance, with all the profession! But ignorance and unbelief always look to some human resource. They know not Christ the Son of God, and therefore make not God their refuge. They flee to man. How characteristic of their sad state! They cry, “Give us of *your* oil, for our lamps are gone out.” And is not this what we constantly find? When many are really in trial, or roused in conscience to a sense of their perilous condition, not knowing the blessedness of fleeing to the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, through Jesus and His finished work, they take refuge in their fellow-men for help; but it always ends in disappointment, according to the Scripture, “Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” So it was with these foolish virgins. The wise can only tell them of the folly of looking to them for oil, of the impossibility of having their need met by them; but they assure them also, though it be at the last moment before the Bridegroom comes and the door is shut, that oil is still selling, and to be had without money and without price. And this is quite plain; but while they were considering the matter, while they were intending to have some, yes, while they were going to buy, the Bridegroom came, and the door was shut. Oh, how solemn this is! It is

not fiction; but it is a picture to the very life, drawn by the Lord Himself, of what is now going on to this awful reality. "While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut." Thus the wise virgins are for ever safe and happy—"for ever with the Lord"—according to His faithful word. But the foolish now discover the tremendous reality of being shut out from the Lord's presence. Their deep and fatal folly was specially marked by two things. 1st. By being content to have credit among men for being Christians, without divine spiritual life, without having the Holy Ghost. "They that were foolish took their lamps, but *took no oil* with them;" and 2ndly, by turning to man for oil when the conscience was awakened, instead of to Christ. Their state too is settled by the Lord's own words, "I know you not." Elsewhere it is said, "He knoweth them that trust in Him," but here it is in reply to their cry and knocking to be let in, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

What other lesson could we learn from this most solemn and instructive portion of divine truth but the importance of watching? Hence our Lord adds, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour" (*v.* 13.) The remaining words of the verse are omitted in all the best copies.

"He comes! He comes! the Bridegroom comes!"

The 'Morning Star' appears;
 The 'cloudless morning' sweetly dawns;
 Saints, quit this vale of tears.
 Your absent Lord no longer mourn;
 Reproach no longer bear:
 'He comes! He comes!' Rise, happy saints,
 To meet Him in the air.

“ He comes! He comes! the Bridegroom comes!
 Oh, sinners, hear the sound!
 Accept Him *now* if you among
 His chosen would be found.
 Still mercy's offered—costless—free,
 No longer turn away;
 ‘ He comes! He comes!’ Oh, linger not!
 Come ‘ while ’tis called to-day.’ ”

THE TALENTS.

This parable presents another line of instruction. Here we have the responsibility of servants. It is not the question of profession or possession, but present responsibility to the Lord during His absence, and His future dealing with the servants according as they have been faithful or unfaithful. It gives us, therefore, the most solemn instruction, that when the Lord returns He will enquire into the practical conduct of those who had taken a place of service during His absence. It is presented to us in the most homely, simple way, but full of serious and searching questions for the heart and conscience, especially in a day like this, when many scarcely deem a man respectable who does not in some way or other profess to be a servant of Christ.

In the Lord's remarks on the sheep and goats which follow this parable we have a *sessional* judgment, but it is not so here. It is true that each case will be entered into, and dealt with according to the Lord's perfectness, but it does not follow that all will be disposed of at the same time. For instance, we expect the Lord's true servants to be caught up to meet Him in the air, to be with the Lord, and to be manifested at His judgment-seat, before we come forth with Him in manifested glory. The judgment of false people, such as tares, will not be

till we appear with the Lord at His coming to judge first the quick or living, then the dead. The Lord therefore speaks of His going away, committing certain talents to His servants, and when He returns making the most solemn enquiry as to the use they had made of them during His absence. He likens Himself therefore to a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. "*After a long time* the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." (Matt. xxv. 14, 19.)

As to the talents, it is important to notice that the servants do not all receive the same number of talents. "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one." There was also, in the distribution of the talents, regard had to the fitness, natural fitness, of the vessel to whom the talents were entrusted. He gave "to every man *according to his several ability.*" This shows not only the perfect wisdom of the Lord in the distribution, but also that the Lord never gives talents to people who have not the ability to use them. It is remarkable, too, that the persons, who faithfully used the talents, not only gained by trading, but the talents actually increased in number. The servant got "other talents." Nor should it be overlooked that it was not the person who had several talents committed to his trust that so grievously failed, but the servant who had only one talent. How true it is that he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

How few seem to consider what responsibility is connected with the profession of the Lord's service. The Lord has been absent now for a long time. More than eighteen hundred years have passed since He rose from the dead, and sat down on the right hand of God; so

that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. The long-suffering of the Lord has been very great, the door of salvation by grace has long been wide open; but long-suffering must have an end, the door must be shut, and the Lord must judge those who have professed to be His servants. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them."

The judgment of the faithful servants is simple enough, and nothing can be happier. They knew the Master's loving heart; they proved His succour; they experienced His blessing. The joy of the Lord was their strength; His love constrained them; His worthiness prompted them to spend their talents in His service with alacrity and delight. They were conscious, too, of vast increase gained by trading. Thus the more they sowed, the more they reaped; the more they gave, the more to them was given. They therefore see their Master's face with joy, and render their account with confidence and cheerfulness. "So, he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." The Lord commends and honours him. "His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (*vv.* 20, 21.) Nor is this all, the talent which the wicked servant did not use was also given to him. With this difference, we find the same confidence and joyous confession to the Lord of the one who had used the two talents faithfully, and the same proportionate increase by its use. He has also precisely the same commendation from the Lord: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful

over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (v. 23.) This is very blessed, and shows that the Lord does not expect from us what He has not given us power to perform. While He loves a cheerful giver, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. The point of instruction seems to be that the Lord expects us to use faithfully for Him during His absence what He has entrusted us with, and at His coming He will reward us accordingly.

The account of the servant who had but "one talent," reads to us the most solemn and serious lessons. The chief feature in his history is, that, though professing the Lord's service, he has a bad opinion of Christ Himself. This is fatal. He believed not the record that God gave of His Son. He saw nothing attractive in Him. He received not the grace and truth that came by Him. He perceived not the inimitable beauty and worth of Jesus. He knew not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. This was the root of all his unfaithful conduct. How could he be faithful to One of whom he had such thoughts? "He that had received the one talent came and said, *Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.*" With such thoughts of our adorable Lord, how could there be confidence? How could the heart be melted and sweetly drawn into willing happy devotedness to such an austere man? No marvel then that the further confession of his heart, uncovered as it was in the presence of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, should be, "I was afraid, and went and hid

thy talent in the earth : lo, there thou hast that is thine." (vv. 24, 25.) Not a word of faith, or love, or true knowledge of Christ in the whole confession ! Like another king Saul, he might 'have had a splendid gift, but the vessel was unclean, unreconciled, unwashed, untaught by the Spirit of God as to his own guilt, and his need of the infinite suitability and perfectness of the atoning work of the Son of God ; his heart was not right with God ; there was no right motive in action in his soul. Hence the Lord pronounces him to be "wicked," "slothful," and "unprofitable." He convicts him from His own lips, and shows his utter inconsistency with his own thoughts : "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed : *thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*" (vv. 26, 27.)

There is a point that must not be overlooked in the Lord's judgment of this wicked servant. It is this. The Lord permits men here to bear the profession of His service, and to be called His servants by those who manifestly know Him not ; but it cannot be so in eternity. When the Lord judges, every thing now covered up is then to be thoroughly unmasked ; men will be consigned to punishment, as they really are. There will be no professing of the name of Christ in hell fire. If the one talent be the bearing of the name and truth of Christ, the professor must be entirely stripped of it, and go to the pit of everlasting torment as a wicked man ; for such he really is. There are those who in the holiness and brightness of the Lord's presence are declared worthy of that name they have confessed before men, and Christ is not ashamed to call

them brethren, or to own them as His good and faithful servants. "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (*vv.* 28-30.)

Can anything more solemnly admonish us to attach the deepest seriousness and reverence to the Lord's service? or more simply instruct us as to the grace of the Lord Jesus, and of personal acquaintance with Him, and enjoyment of Him, who suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, being the spring of all faithful service? Does it not also show how careful we should be not to urge any to the profession of the Lord's service who are not truly reconciled to God by the peace-making, peace-speaking power of the blood of the cross?

"O blessed Lord! what hast Thou done!
 How vast a ransom paid!
 Who could conceive God's only Son
 Upon the altar laid!

"Lord! while our souls in faith repose
 Upon thy precious blood,
 Peace, like an even river, flows,
 And mercy like a flood.

"But boundless joy shall fill our hearts,
 When gazing on Thy face,
 We fully see what faith imparts,
 And *glory* crowns Thy *grace*."

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.

The concluding section of this prophetic discourse of our Lord extends beyond the range which has hitherto

been brought before us. It is very peculiar, and distinct too, in its character of instruction. It is not the *Bridegroom* coming for the *wise virgins*, nor is it the *Master* judging His *servants*, but it is the *King* sitting upon His throne and judging *the nations*, which will then be gathered before Him. Such it is stated to be. It describes a sessional judgment on living persons, which will not have its accomplishment till after we have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air; for the Lord does not take unto Him His kingly power and reign till He comes forth in manifested glory. Then we shall come *with* Him; for "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear *with* Him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.) This is enough to show that this judgment cannot refer to us, but is simply what it says, a judgment of nations. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations." (*vv.* 31, 32.) This judgment must not be confounded with the "great white throne" time, for that is a judgment of the dead, when the earth and heaven will have fled away; but here we have living people, "nations" judged on the earth. I say on the earth, because Christ is coming to the earth as King, and He will be "King over all the earth," and all will be made subject to Him. "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." (See Zech. xiv., and Psalm cx.) It is a judgment to be fulfilled on the earth, and therefore there is not the least hint of a single dead person being raised at this time. It is the King in manifested glory on His throne, attended with angelic hosts (See 2 Thess. i.), judging "the nations" gathered before Him. It is not Israel, but Gentiles—all nations.

The character of the judgment is as to how they have dealt with His brethren. It is important to see that there are four companies in this scene—"the King," "the sheep," "the goats," and "the brethren."

Who are these brethren? Surely, as we have seen, they cannot be those who form the body, the church, for we shall have been caught away from the earth before this. The *principles* here inculcated are most important, for those who love the Lord Jesus love His saints; but we are not now considering principles, but endeavouring to understand the true character of instruction which the Lord here sets before us. That there will be a company of Christ's brethren after the flesh, of the true and literal seed of Abraham and David, raised up, inspired with Jewish hopes, joyfully anticipating Messiah's kingdom, who will carry forth what is called "the gospel of the kingdom" after the church is gone, is plainly taught in the Scriptures. Their prayers will come up to the throne of God in heaven as incense, while the heavenly saints are *there*, hence we read in Revelation v. of "vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." We have also seen Jewish saints in suffering during the great tribulation, when meditating on Matthew xxiv. Again in Revelation vi., when the fifth seal is opened, we read of souls under the altar crying for vengeance. This is surely not a Christian cry. How came they there? We are told they were slain *for the word of God*, and *for the testimony which they held.* (v. 9.) Our Lord spoke of this testimony. He said, as we have already considered in chap. xxiv., "*this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world;*" that is, the civilized world, or as Mark expresses it, "among all nations." The gospel of the kingdom, or the glad-tidings of the

King coming to set up the promised kingdom on earth, will characterize this testimony. The consequence will be that some will hear and treat these messengers of the King kindly; others, however, will not hear, but will persecute and even put some to death. This testimony, therefore, will be connected with a special judgment. However, when the King comes, all nations will be gathered before Him.

Of necessity, therefore, there will be two parties—sheep, or righteous; goats, or wicked. The King knows all things, and searches every heart. Hence we read that "*He shall separate* them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And *He shall* set the sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left." (vv. 32, 33.) The whole question, I repeat, is as to how they acted towards the *King's brethren*. Nor can this judgment be regarded as singular; for when God called out Abraham, he said, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." (Gen. xii. 3.) This has often been marked in God's dealings with the descendants of Abraham, and will be specially fulfilled in this judgment, in connection with God having raised them up to go forth with "the gospel of the kingdom."

No wonder, then, that it is written, "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Observe, here it is *the kingdom* they are brought into, and it is *from* (not *before*) the foundation of the world. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited

me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee? And the *King* shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye have done it unto me." (*vv.* 34-40.) What characterized these "sheep" or "righteous," as they are called, was their love to the *King's brethren*; and their destiny is a place in the kingdom, and a kingdom, too, prepared *from* the foundation of the world. It need scarcely be added that this is not a heavenly scene.

Now, look at the goats. "Then shall He say unto them on His left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (*vv.* 41-45.)

The sentence is final. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."