



THE OLIVET
DISCOURSE

By Gavin Hamilton

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By

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“Maranatha! Highlight of the Twentieth Century,”

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FOREWORD

The general consensus of Christian belief is that we are in the closing stages of the Age of Grace. At any moment now we may expect Christ to give the resurrection-rallying shout and to rapture the saints to be in His presence evermore. Shortly, thereafter, He shall be manifested to the world with His glorified saints and holy angels, to assume universal sovereignty.

This belief is justified. Signs abound, on every hand, which predicate the imminence of Christ's return. Within the last thirty years we have witnessed drastic, revolutionary changes in the world of nations and in the realm of science. Let me relate a few concrete examples.

The Jews now enjoy national autonomy for the first time in twenty-five hundred years. Their independence was given on May 14, 1948. Russia, too, has risen from the lowest rung on the international ladder to vie with the United States of America as world-power-number-one. She moves quickly towards the realization of her role as head of the Great Northern Confederacy so clearly predicted by the prophet Ezekiel. The Asiatic nations likewise hasten to make good the Apocalyptic seer's vision of a united Asia. Japan's slogan, "Asia for the Asiatics," is fast becoming a reality. Then the Western nations have already formed a bloc ready to withstand any aggressive moves from Russia or Asia. Thus, the prophetic picture of the North and East against the South and West, comes clearer into view with the passing days.

With the advent of atomic and hydrogen weapons we may safely say that we are within foreseeable distance of Armageddon. This is the last battle between the nations ere Christ returns to bring peace on earth and good will among men.

Prophecy is God's foreview of the history of men and nations. Both the Old and New Testaments are replete with predictions

as to happenings at the End of the Age. They also detail a veritable "Utopia" for the sons of man when Christ is in sole command.

Satan hates the prophetic Word and vehemently opposes it. Since he cannot hinder the fulfillment of events outlined in Scripture he seeks to confuse the saints, by the instrument of controversy, as to their order of fulfillment. This has resulted in the forfeiture of "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," failure to strive "together for the faith of the Gospel," and a factual exhibition of weakness. As the Church Age closes, Satan has succeeded in creating an unbridgable gulf between saints.

The Lord's final Olivet Discourse has been one of Satan's chief targets. By his cunning and artful treachery he has fed his devotees in the various cults on its supposed teachings. He has played upon the ignorance of professing Christians, for, alas, they knew not the prophetic Word. But he has hit the bull's eye many times in evangelical circles. He has made this otherwise clear prophetic portion to mean things contrary to sound doctrine. Indeed, every extraneous belief finds support somewhere in this Discourse.

I have been terribly conscious of these things as I have travelled around the world in missionary conferences and special campaigns. Although I have written two books which deal with prophecy, namely, "Maranatha! Highlight of the Twentieth Century," and "The Rapture and the Great Tribulation," I have felt the colossal need for one on "The Olivet Discourse." The opportunity never came until recently when the Lord allowed me to have a throat condition which limited my public service. I have used my time to pen these pages before you which treat this important part of Holy Writ. I trust the messages will be a real blessing to you.

I have been much indebted to Mrs. Leo Zerby, Athens, Michigan, for her scholarly criticism and to Mrs. Everett Parker, Kansas City, Missouri, for her painstaking work of typing the manuscripts. May the Lord bless them both for their unselfish

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effort to promote the glory of God through the pages of this book.

Yours very affectionately in Christ,
Gavin Hamilton

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CHAPTER ONE

THE APPROACH TO THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

I HAVE IN MIND to bring you a series of messages on our Lord's final Olivet Discourse. It seems to me that here we have an unveiling of world events at the time of the end, events which herald the imminency of Messiah's return to earth to set up His world-wide kingdom.

I have to confess, with deep sorrow of heart and a real sense of shame, that this simple prophecy has become the battleground of theologians. It has been used as the spring-board for so many erroneous doctrines that to enumerate them would be an impossible and almost useless task. However, to the thoughtful mind they are nothing short of endless confusion.

For several years after my conversion to God, I read, and in a measure, understood the prophecy. Then I began to delve into books. To my utter amazement I found such a variety of ideas that I began to wonder what I really did believe! I found that some taught from the prophecy that there would be a pre-tribulation rapture of the saints to heaven. Others differed and saw ground for believing that the Church will be required to go through the Great Tribulation. Others again understood the passage to teach the total dissolution of the old heavens and earth with a general resurrection of all dead ones and the final separation of the sheep and goats with a new heaven and a new earth for the redeemed of the ages. Then I came across one school of thought that taught a partial rapture, especially from the teaching of the parables covered here. A number of

teachers see in the parables the possibility of a person being saved and then lost again.

Such a variety of beliefs drives one to the BIBLE and into the presence of Him who wrote it and who alone can interpret it, to find out for his own satisfaction what the prophecy teaches. Even then I know there shall be disagreement on the part of some. Regardless of criticism, however, I have determined to present what I believe and to give you the privilege of weighing the evidence and of making your own decision.

THE KING AND THE KINGDOM

At the onset of these messages it will be profitable to consider the Book in which the prophecy is found. Usually each writer has a theme, or a particular truth, which he develops. In the case of Matthew there is almost universal agreement that his theme is the King and the Kingdom. He pursues the thought revealed in the Old Testament and shows that the King who was promised and prophesied there has appeared in the Person of Jesus Christ. For this reason he quotes voluminously from the Old Testament Scriptures. To every Jew that reads his account he seems to say, "Behold your King."

There is no question in my mind about the overruling providence of God in placing Matthew's Gospel at the forefront of the New Testament. It provides the bridge between the Testaments. The pious Jew, for instance, that reads Chapter One will find himself in the company of well-known patriarchs and kings. As he travels down the long list of names, he eventually comes face to face with the long-expected Messiah. Jesus Christ ends the genealogical line. There is no king after Him. And, if he cares to go through to the end of the Book, he will find that Jesus Christ dies and rises from the grave to live in the power of an indissoluble life. What else can anyone do, if he sincerely searches for the truth about the Messiah, but acknowledge and adore Him?

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PRESENTATION OF THE KINGDOM

The Gospeller leaves no stone unturned to show that Jesus is Israel's Messiah, both by His verified genealogical line, His virgin birth, and the fact that He is very God (Ch. 1:1-25). He brings into view the Magis' recognition of Him, while Herod's rage is graphically described (Ch. 2). The forerunner of the Messiah is introduced to prepare the people to receive their King, and the Father clarifies the whole position by anointing Him King by the Holy Spirit (Ch. 3). Then comes the conflict between the Sovereign and Satan in the wilderness with Satan subjugated by the Sovereign so that He becomes a Light to the Gentiles and brings to His feet the peoples from many parts of the area for blessing (Ch. 4). Surely the King is among His people! The kingdom is theirs if they will but accept Him.

Matthew now travels apace to present the principles of the kingdom (Chs. 5-7). They govern His subjects—men born of the Spirit of God. The men themselves are described as poor in spirit, mourners, meek, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, the peacemakers, those that suffer for Christ's sake, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.

The powers of the kingdom come next (Chs. 8-12). The miracles demonstrate the powers of the world-to-come. Two things, at least, may be observed! First, the miracles proved the Messianic claims of Christ, for miracles had to accompany His visit to earth. "The eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isa. 35). The Sovereign would have His subjects strong in mind and body. There is no sickness when He is around! Secondly, the miracles revealed that the kingdom of God was nigh unto the people (see Luke 10:20). Once more we witness the King and the Kingdom! Alas! He is rejected by Israel. His miracles are attributed to Satan. This is the sin unpardonable.

The present aspect of the Kingdom is discernible in the seven

parables spoken by our Lord (Matt. 13) and in His revelation of the Church (Ch. 16). The Kingdom is in mystery form now. The King is enthroned in Heaven though rejected by the world at large. However, those that profess His Name, whether real or unreal, whether wheat or tares, are in the Kingdom of the heavens. This condition will persist until the Kingdom is established in power and publicly on earth. Then the angels will sever the good from the bad. The Church, on the other hand, introduces us to the real born-again believers between the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the rapture of the saints (I Thess. 4:16-18). They occupy the Divine interest in this Age of Grace.

PROPHETIC OUTLOOK OF THE KINGDOM

Now we come to the prophetic outlook of the Kingdom. This is perfectly pictured in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25). The King looks beyond the present Age of Grace and focuses attention upon the end of the age and the time when He will return to earth. He gives us every reason to believe that He is coming back again. He tells us that "immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Ch. 24: 29-30). Again He says, when referring to Himself as the Bridegroom, "The Bridegroom came" (Ch. 25-10). Finally, He declared, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory . . . and before Him shall be gathered all nations . . ." (Ch. 25: 31, 32).

I have a strong urge to stop here and point out to you the difference between the Lord's return to earth and His return to the atmospheric heavens to rapture His saints to be with Himself. Already I feel as if I have lifted a red-hot poker! I know I am on controversial ground. But the Bible makes a difference between the coming of Christ into the air and His coming back to earth, so let us face the facts.

TRIBULATION OR RAPTURE

I have a friend who wrote an article on the topic "Tribulation or Rapture—Which?" He begins by asking, "Why did the Lord Jesus conceal the Secret Rapture in Matthew 24?" He goes on to say that he once held that there would be a seven-year period between the Rapture and the Revelation, or between Christ's coming into the air and His coming back to earth. Now, he declares, after years of study and prayer he is convinced that there will be no secret rapture before the tribulation but that the Church will undoubtedly be called upon to face the Antichrist and that Christ will come at the close and not at the beginning of that period.

I will let my preacher friend tell his own story. He says: "One day in the early '20's I began preaching on Prophecy. I had taken my people through Daniel without difficulty. Then I started on Matthew 24, then I got into trouble. I had announced that I would deal with Matthew 24 at the next service. Hundreds had gathered. I was in a maze, for I was perplexed. So I took a verse here and there through the chapter and thus satisfied the people for that hour at least. But now the next meeting was coming. What was I to say?"

"I need not point out that there is no pre-tribulation Rapture in Matthew 24. The Second Coming is unmistakably placed 'immediately after the tribulation' (v. 29), and I was forced to the conclusion that if the Rapture was to be 'before' the Tribulation, the Lord Jesus Christ would certainly have given some hint, at least. He was dealing with the End-Time of the Age. It is unthinkable that He would have spoken so minutely of the Tribulation without stating that the Church would escape. Instead, He purposely led His hearers to the belief that His followers would be in it. Hence, I was staggered, nor could I honestly defend my previous position.

"So, when I again faced the people, I said sufficient to let them know that I questioned my former stand and saw evidence of a post-tribulation Rapture. For, as I read Matthew 24 and 25, I saw that many things, as prophesied by the Lord

Jesus Christ, simply had to take place before Jesus could come; namely, 'All these things' (v. 33), especially the prediction regarding the preaching of the Gospel. See Mark 13:10 and note the significance of the word 'first.' Thus, since God's future program could not be set aside, there could be no 'any moment' expectation of Christ's Return. We are to watch, watch as prophecy after prophecy is fulfilled, ever looking forward to His appearing; and, in the End-Time, to watch as never before, and to always be ready, for none can ever know how quickly the events predicted might come to pass and Christ return."

RAPTURE A NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION

I know my friend is genuinely sincere. His analysis of Matthew 24 is probably that followed by all who believe like himself. What puzzles me, however, is why saints should look for any mention of the Rapture in this Olivet discourse. It is not there. More than that, it is not in the Old Testament nor in any of the Synoptic Gospels. Its first specific mention is made by the Lord Jesus Himself in His Upper Room discourse when He said "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14::2, 3). The *Rapture* is definitely a New Testament revelation.

The reason for this new phase of events at the Second Coming stems from the difference between Israel and the Church, or between Kingdom truth and Church truth.

The Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels have Israel and the thought of the Kingdom in view. John's Gospel and the Church Epistles have the Church and its heavenly hope before them. You will note that the Old Testament saints and the disciples of Jesus right through the Synoptic Gospels—until the Upper Room Discourse, which is vastly different than the Sermon on the Mount or the Olivet Discourse—entertained the

idea of Messiah establishing His Kingdom on earth. Never once did they contemplate a rapture to meet Messiah in the air. This revelation was yet to be given. Once given, the disciples eagerly anticipated meeting their Lord in the air *before* the establishment of the kingdom.

I have not said one word about the Rapture preceding the Tribulation. That is another line of truth vitally linked with the Church and it introduces the difference between Israel and the Church. To see this difference is to appreciate some of the distinguishing ways of God with men. Israel is the nation God chose through whom He would reveal Himself to men. She is the mother of the Law, for "the Law was given by Moses." She is also the mother of the Word of God, for by her we have our Bible. She, too, is the mother of our Lord, as Paul so clearly states in these words, "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came" (Rom. 9:5). And she will be the mother of world-peace and prosperity when Messiah comes to earth to make her the head of the nations. Israel, then, is the fountain-head of all prophecy.

The Church, on the other hand, is heavenly in her calling and shares the heavenly places with Christ, the glorified Lord (Heb. 3:1; Eph. 2:5-6). She has a heavenly hope, for she waits for the Lord Jesus Christ to come from heaven to change her into His image (Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:29-30). And she will be heavenly in her destiny since she is destined to share the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem (Heb. 12:21-23; Rev. 21:9-10).

ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

This difference between Israel and the Church simply means that all prophecy concerns itself with Israel and never with the Church. I refer to prophecy as it relates to times and seasons, to national and international events, and to the Great Tribulation ahead.

Some years ago, while on missionary conference work, I met a missionary who had very recently changed from believing in

pre-tribulation Rapture to the post-tribulation Rapture. And he was quite full of the subject! I asked him one day if he would care to answer three questions on this topic. I told him to confine his answers to the portion between Romans and Jude, for that is the portion which deals exclusively with the Church. Here were my questions:

First, where from Romans to Jude do you ever find the Church linked with national or international events? His answer was "Nowhere."

Second, where from Romans to Jude do you find the Church connected with dates such as 1,260 days, 42 months, or time, times or half a time? Again he replied, "The Church, as such, is not seen connected with dates."

"Third, where do you find between Romans and Jude any instructions as to what the Church should do when the Great Tribulation is abroad in the world? He gave this reply: "There are no instructions there for the Church in Great Tribulation days."

ISRAEL—GOD'S TIME-PIECE

I am sure that the confusion that abounds with the prophetic Word is due to failure to see that prophecy does not belong to the Church but to Israel. She is God's time-piece. To put the Church in prophecy is to make her Israel's substitute. This is utterly untenable and unscriptural. The Church has not continued Israel's program. She stands on Christian, not Jewish, ground. She is linked, livingly and lastingly, with the glorified Christ in heaven and she knows nothing about animal sacrifices, an earthly priesthood, or a Palestinian inheritance. Since prophecy always relates to the earth, it is vitally related to the earthly people, Israel.

That this is a truth incontrovertible can be judged by looking at Daniel's celebrated prophecy: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,

and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Dan. 9:24).

This entire prophecy belongs to Daniel's people, the Jews, and to the Holy City, Jerusalem. The Church is not here, nor is she seen in connection with any part of it. The time-period given is seventy times seven years or 490 years. After this period we are told that God will establish His world-wide Kingdom under the Messiah. However, He divides the period into three parts; namely, 49 years from the issuance of the decree to restore and build Jerusalem; then a further 434 years after which the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be cut off, or crucified; then the last seven years which begins when the Roman Prince makes a covenant with the Jewish nation at the time of the End. The Church comes in between the 483 years and the beginning of the last seven. She occupies the parenthesis. But, she is outside the prophetic sphere.

It is not within the scope of this message to go into the details of this last seven-year period of prophetic history. I will do so in another message. Suffice it to be said that it is this seven-year period which divides the time between the coming of Christ into the air for His Church and His coming to earth to set up His Kingdom. Naturally, this predicates the Rapture of the Church ahead of the Great Tribulation.

THAT BLESSED HOPE

I have always felt that to put the Great Tribulation before the Rapture of the Church, or to spiritualize the prophecies which relate to Israel and transfer them to the Church, or to advocate that by the preaching of the Gospel the Kingdom Glorious shall be ushered in is to do irreparable damage to the truth of the imminent coming of Christ. And I am not alone in this belief.

I take this privilege of quoting to you part of an article along this line written by William Kelly, a great Bible scholar of recent days, who says, "Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapors that con-

stantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish in their souls the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millennium first, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it must act as a veil, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope; yet one cannot but look for His coming in an imperfect manner. If you bring in a great tribulation first, this also lowers the outlook and enfeebles the hope greatly; it occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and its shade of desolation. They are mistakes of theorists. The one puts a wrong expectation between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling, in the thought that the Church must go through so dreadful a crisis.

"Be assured, my brethren, that the Scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ in child-like faith, being perfectly certain that God's Word is as true as our hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious Kingdom; but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming. Without doubt the Great Tribulation shall come, but not for the Christian. When it is a question about the Jew, you can understand it well; for why does the greatest tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry, yea, of the Beast and the Antichrist worshipped. It is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing directly to do. The predicted trouble falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those that ought to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the abomination to be put in the sanctuary of God."

Our hope, beloved, is the personal return of Christ to translate us to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:16-17), to take us to the Father's home on high (John 14:2-3), and thereafter reveal us to the world when we shall assume world leadership with Him (Col. 3:4). To interpose the Great Tribulation, or anything else, ahead of "that Blessed Hope" is to create insur-

mountable difficulties and deprive us of our God-born privilege of "gathering together unto Him" before the world-travail is experienced (II Thess. 2:1-2).

I know that the shadows of the Great Tribulation are falling across our pathway. There are indications everywhere that the end of this Age of Grace is in sight. The Lord is at hand. It is later than we think. There is very little time left in which to do the Master's work. So let us arise in the power of the ungrieved Spirit of God with quickened affections for Christ and a passion to reach the unreached millions so that they, too, might have opportunity to receive Christ as Lord. Let us "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

CHAPTER TWO

THE OLIVET QUESTIONS

THE BACKGROUND of the Olivet Discourse is pregnant with interest. It is traced to the Lord's lament over Jehovah's chosen city, Jerusalem. The people had rejected Him and within a few hours His blood would be upon them. With His perfect knowledge of all they would do to Him, He cried, "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! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, "Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:37-39).

Dramatic, climactic words follow this outburst: "Jesus went out, and departed from the temple" (Ch. 24:1). This clearly meant "Lo Ammi," or "not My people." Indeed, it was the divine hand writing on Israel's walls "Ichabod," "the glory has departed." From henceforth she is set aside.

It is a tragedy unspeakable when the Divine Presence is withdrawn. And how often this has been experienced in the course of history! The threat to remove the lampstand unless repentance is forthcoming is often carried out. There must be no trifling with sin. It ultimately leads to total collapse. Samson discovered this when it was too late. We read that he "wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Jud. 16:20). It is possible for true believers in Christ to be "saved so as by fire," or by the skin of their teeth. They will never be lost, but in this life they may become "castaways." Paul dreaded this for

himself. He did not desire to be put on the shelf. Let us, therefore, be not high-minded but seek to serve the Lord with reverence and godly fear.

DISPENSATIONAL CHANGEOVER

Earlier in his Gospel, Matthew has shown us the same truth in a different manner. He records that while the Lord was addressing the people His mother and brethren came to see Him. Immediately upon being told their mission He quietly said, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" Then, turning to His disciples He said, "Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother" (Ch. 12:46-50). Then comes this potent statement: "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side" (Ch. 13:1).

Do you recognize the similarity here? There is the strong suggestion in this incident of Christ's break with Israel after the flesh that the natural relationship is no longer acknowledged by Him. Now all that matters is a spiritual relationship formed by the impartation of the Divine Nature which enables men to do the will of the Father. Thus the way is open for as many as will receive Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—to become the children of God which are born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

The parables of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens follow. They predicate that Israel is "cut off" while the Lord sows seed in the world-field to secure a harvest for God (Matt. 13). This gracious work is done during His enthronement at the right hand of God. Men everywhere are given the opportunity of acknowledging His rights. We speak of this period as the Age of Grace when God the Spirit is bringing to Christ His chosen Bride.

Paul follows Matthew in this dispensational changeover. He portrays Israel, in the Roman Epistle, in her glorious past with

all the divine privileges (Ch. 9); then presents her in this present Age of Grace as nationally rejected but individually responsible to believe in Christ's resurrection and to confess Jesus as Lord for salvation (Ch. 10); and finally, pictures her in days ahead as being restored to the divine favor (Ch. 11). You will observe in this last chapter that she loses her place in the Olive Tree—the natural branches are cut off—to permit the Gentiles to be grafted in. The place of privilege and blessing is given the Gentiles. And what blessing there has been! The precious story of God's redeeming love in Christ has been heralded to the uttermost parts of the earth. Millions have been gloriously saved; millions more have professed His Name. But Christendom has been as unfaithful to her trust as Israel was to hers, so she will eventually be "cut off" that the natural branches be grafted in again. The natural branches, however, shall be grafted in as "Spiritual Israel"—a nation born of the Spirit of God.

PROPHETIC GROUND

The disciples were perplexed by the Lord's lament: that the temple should be left desolate was more than they could understand. It had a grandeur greater than Solomon's though it had never been graced with the Shekinah Glory. So they call His attention to it. His reply clears away all misunderstandings. "See ye not all these things?" said He, "Verily, I say unto you, 'There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down'" (Ch. 24:2).

At once we are on prophetic ground. The Lord speaks of things which are *not* as though they *were*. He is surely that Prophet whom God had promised He would raise up unto Israel, One greater than Moses (see Deut. 18). Could He really be right? Would this prophecy fall to the ground? We know that when Jesus uttered those words the destruction of the temple was nowhere in sight. As another has truly remarked, "Nothing seemed so unlikely when our Lord spoke it. The Hebrew people were on excellent terms with their Roman

Governors. There had been rebellions, there had been difficulties, but to all appearances these things had been largely settled. The perpetual principle of the Roman government was never to interfere with the religion of a people unless the people made that religion the cause of disaffection. Everything seemed at that moment to be hopeful and prosperous." But regardless of appearance the prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter a generation later. His word cannot be broken.

The prediction of the temple's destruction brings forth the Olivet questions. The disciples ask Him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming? and of the end of the world?"

To me the questions seem straightforward and simple. I see no necessity for us to be confused by them or even with the answers given. Let us approach the whole prophecy with perfectly open minds. Our only profit is in understanding the mind of the Lord. Should its meaning run counter to our pet ideas of eschatology, let us have grace to submit to the teachings.

You cannot help but notice that those disciples had their hearts set upon the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. Their questions have to do with this truth. The two on the road to Emmaus voiced their sentiments when they said, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). Instead of the Kingdom coming in power and glory, they learn about the desolation of their temple. That was a great blow to them; it upset all their calculations. They knew now, if they had not known before, that judgment was pending. But, when would it fall? And after it fell would the kingdom be set up? To them that would be the consummation of the age.

THE GOD-BREATHED WORD

Their first question "When shall these things be?" refers to the predicted destruction of the temple. We have the full answer to this in Luke's Gospel. Matthew deals with events at

the end-time so by-passes the question here. The silence of Matthew and the revelation by Luke bespeak the truth of inspiration. Those writers were controlled by the Spirit of God. They wrote as they were guided by Him. And this, beloved, is the hall-mark of the God-breathed Word! It may be that Matthew's silence is dictated by the fact that his Gospel is dispensational, whereas Luke's revelation may be accounted for because he treats of things historical and moral.

The omissions and additions in the Bible are of God. We may not be quite able to trace God's infinite wisdom everywhere in the Book but we can certainly trust Him implicitly. Faith in God will cancel all doubts about His Word. For "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is absolutely imperative that we accept the Bible as inspired. I like to stress this fact. It is so necessary in our day. Statistics reveal that we have never had so many young people in our colleges and universities as now. They also show that we have never had so many skeptical, atheistic educators as now. So few of them believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures; our young men and women are in great danger under their teachings. To graduate with a Christian testimony, and a heart unstained by all the pollutions of Modernism, which is nothing short of wicked, diabolical deception, is a miracle of grace. For this reason I constantly emphasize this side of things. You *can* trust your Bible.

DESTRUCTION OF TEMPLE AND JERUSALEM

Let us listen to Luke's account as stated by Jesus. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that desolation is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains . . . 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" (Ch. 21:20-24).

This prophesied destruction was literally fulfilled by the Roman armies under Titus in A.D. 70. Some 1,100,000 Jews

died at the time. In addition to this, Jesus had mentioned the desolation of the temple. He said that not one stone would be left upon another. Our history book records that strict orders were given the soldiers before the attack on Jerusalem began that the Holy Place must be preserved at all costs. Yet, one soldier rushed into the temple with a lighted torch and set fire to it. Before the flames could be extinguished it was a charred ruin. It was left for the workmen to remove one stone from another to make good the prophecy. Did Satan seek to make void the prediction of Jesus? It looked like it. How foolish can he be? And how foolish can men be that carry out his designs? Our Lord *can* be trusted. His predictions *always* materialize.

I like to read the parable our Lord gave which depicted and predicted the fall of Jerusalem. It fits right here. He covers the past, present and future history of Israel as He relates the story of the marriage of the King's Son. At one point He says that the King's messengers were badly treated by the people so "the King . . . was wroth, and sent forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matt. 22:7). This parable was uttered before the Olivet Discourse. It has at least two revealing truths. First, it assures us that Christ is Omniscient. He knew all about Jerusalem's future and fall. Then, too, it brings us face to face with the truth of God's sovereignty in the affairs of nations. Notice that the armies under Titus that inflicted the judgment on Jerusalem and the temple are spoken of as "His armies." God is still the Governor of the universe. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. He sets up kings and throws them down. Nothing happens but what He has the last word. At times He may appear indifferent to human suffering and the dastardly deeds of nations but He still keeps watch from His Throne. Let us be encouraged in days of darkness, when everything seems to go wrong, to trust Him. Remember it is God who makes "all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28).

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

JERUSALEM REMAINS DIVIDED

What about the future of Jerusalem? Has this Omniscient One anything to say about it? Glance at the record again. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Jesus spans the centuries ahead. He makes two observations. First, Jerusalem shall be under Gentile domination until after He returns to earth to set up His kingdom. Second, the times of the Gentiles shall run their course till the Son of Man comes again.

This prophecy speaks its loudest today. Our twentieth century has brought phenomenal changes in the world situation and especially in connection with Palestine and the city Jerusalem. For some 2500 years the city has been under Gentile control. Four great world empires have occupied it. I refer to Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome. The Turks were its rulers until 1917 when General Allenby wrested it from them. Then the Jews were given a strip of the Holy Land as a national home-land and it was put under a British mandate. At long last the dream of Jewry was realized when national independence was granted on May 14, 1948. The Jews were a nation again after two and one-half millenniums of wandering. However, this privilege was not to go unchallenged. The Arab nations rose up against Israel and sought its extermination. A bitter struggle ensued but the threat was averted by an Israeli victory.

I visited Israel in 1951. I met many missionaries, also Jews and Arabs, then. What stories they told about the recently fought war! They were thrilling and somehow I had the conviction that GOD was back of Israel's sweeping victory. They told me about Jerusalem on the very last day of the war. Evidently the Jews were in a position to take the Arab section of Jerusalem and thus incorporate it into their own part, but they were hindered by lack of time. They still needed two hours to complete the capture when the United Nations Organization issued an immediate cease-fire order. Why were they not permitted to go ahead? Why have they

not taken it since then? What hinders them? The answer is *the purpose of God*. I am within my rights when I say that I do not believe the Jews will possess the Arab half of Jerusalem before Messiah returns to reign. It will continue in Gentile hands till then.

Am I putting myself out on a slender limb? It may appear so. And more so when you consider that national and international changes take place almost overnight these days. Why then be so dogmatic? There is no alternative *if* we believe the Word of Christ. He said so and we accept His Word as final. There is no other court of appeal. It makes no difference to the Christian who takes this stand whether Russia, the Asiatic nations or the Arabs attempt to upset the plan. He knows they shall utterly fail. Jerusalem shall remain divided "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Let me bring this Jerusalem situation home to your heart. It surely bespeaks a solemn and yet thrilling truth. If in 1949 the Lord's return to earth were two hours away—for it would have been imperative that He return had the Jews taken the Arab half of Jerusalem then—how near do you think His coming for His Church is now? It seems to me, beloved, that we are on the threshold of the Rapture. At any moment we will hear the trumpet sound and be on the way home. What a thrilling, exciting hour in which to live! Prepare, my brethren, for the coming of the Lord *is* near.

KINGDOM-CONSCIOUS DISCIPLES

I must hasten to examine the second question, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" This word *coming* or "parousia" basically means *presence* or *to be present with*. That makes it easy to understand the nature of the question. The disciples were asking the Lord about the predicted desolation of the temple and when they were to expect His return to them. This to them was the consummation of the age. To say the least, they were Kingdom-conscious.

It seems almost superfluous for me to repeat that these disciples were the godly Jewish remnant in Christ's day. But, unless this is understood, then the prophecy is baffling and bewildering to us. Our Lord spoke prophetically of those dear ones as "the excellent, in whom is all My delight" (Psa. 16:3). Then, since Jesus was speaking about events in the then distant future, they were before Him as representatives of the Jewish believers at the time His prophecies would be realized. In other words, the disciples represent the 144,000 saved and sealed Israelites mentioned by John in the Book of the Revelation. These shall come upon the scene after the Church is raptured home to heaven (see Rev. 7).

It is necessary for me to stay a moment here and say that the disciples also represented the members of the Body of Christ while they were with the Lord in the Upper Room prior to His death. The reason we know this is that the teaching is altogether different. The Upper Room Discourse has to do with the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the ministry of the glorified Christ as our Great High Priest, and the return of the Son to take us to the Father's house above (see John 14-17). Not one of these things appertained to Israel: every one appertains to the Church. So, the disciples are on *Christian*, or *Church* ground in the Upper Room. We must learn to distinguish between things that differ and be "workmen which needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

SIGN OF THE PAROUSIA

Now let us look at the word *coming* or "parousia." I would not trouble you with this word but for the difference of opinion abroad on it. You will likely come up against it in your reading or when a preacher refers to it. Some expositor has the audacity to tell us that the word means "a single crisis breaking with the utmost suddenness." This sounds terrific! Then he clinches it by stating that it allows for "no prolonged period." That is subtle! But when you

read his book through you find he is using the word "parousia" to prove that the Church must go through the Great Tribulation. He makes the Rapture and the Revelation to take place simultaneously. He sees no seventieth week—or seven years—of Daniel between these two events. He implies that the Church will be revealed to the world the very same hour it is raptured.

Is this absolutely right? Has this expositor given us the true meaning of the word? I will look at a few places where the word "parousia" occurs but I beg of you to secure a Young's Analytical Concordance and turn to the word *coming* and see how many times it is rendered "parousia" in the original. Then find the passages and meditate upon them. In that way you will satisfy your own heart as to the proper meaning of the word.

HOW "PAROUSIA" IS USED

"Parousia" is first mentioned in Matthew 24:3. It is connected with the question asked by the disciples, "What is the sign of Thy coming?" Without quibbling we know that Christ's return in great power and glory to earth will be sudden. Jesus made that plain even in this Olivet Discourse. He spoke of it as "the lightning (that) cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west" (v. 27). But back of their minds when they used this word they wanted to know when He would be present with them to begin His kingdom reign. They certainly did want Him to prolong His stay even forevermore.

The word is used by Paul in his letter to the beloved Philippians. He says, "Ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence (parousia) only, but much more in my absence" (Ch. 2:12). Was Paul's "parousia" in Philippi "a single crisis breaking with the utmost suddenness?" If so, he certainly stayed in the city many days. The account states that he was there several days before and after Lydia's conversion. The demon-possessed girl troubled him many days. He was thrown into

jail and there he remained till the jailer and his household professed salvation and the authorities came to set him free (see Acts 16). This adds up to a prolonged period!

Paul uses the word several times when dealing with the Second Advent of Christ and with correlated events. I will mention two. First, he used the word when he wrote of the Rapture and "our gathering together unto Him" (II Thess. 2:1). I expect the Lord to come with suddenness into the atmospheric heavens to call us home. I also expect to meet Him in the air and to be "for ever with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16-17). Does that infer a prolonged period? Second, he uses the word in reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming (parousia)" (I Thess. 2:19). At the judgment seat our works shall be tried. There, too, the rewards shall be given the saints. It appears to me that this will occupy considerable time, anyway!

To employ this word to support the theory that the Church must go through the Great Tribulation is hardly fair. Already we have discovered that it does entail "a prolonged period" whether connected with the Rapture, the Judgment Seat, or the Revelation. And without laboring the point, the prolonged period is an absolute necessity between the Rapture and the Revelation so that prophecy may be fulfilled. The Bible makes crystal clear that *Israel*, not the Church, is the vessel of prophecy. It, therefore, predicates the Rapture of the Church to permit God to fulfill His prophetic program through Israel.

CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE

Quickly glance at the third question about the *consummation* of the *age*, "When shall be . . . the end of the world?" I have changed the words to those given in the Authorized Version. In this matter all my brethren are in agreement: The word used as "world" is rightly changed to "age." Many

people have taken the expression "the end of the world" to mean the dissolution of the material universe. It does not mean that at all in this passage. Elsewhere this subject is treated and we are given to understand that the time will come when the heavens and the earth shall pass away. But that cannot be until after Christ has reigned on this earth for 1,000 years according to Revelation (Ch. 20:4-6). "The consummation of the age" will be the end of "Man's Day" (I Cor. 4:3). This day began when man sinned and will carry on till Christ returns to reign. Man has been running world affairs in much the way he feels best. He feels himself quite capable of doing so without any divine help. That is why we have reached the point of total collapse. The end is now within sight.

What age do you believe the disciples had in mind when they asked this question? What age could they have had in mind? The only age they knew anything about was the one in which they found themselves. That was what we might call the Jewish Age which was governed by the law. We know that they knew nothing about the Church age—the Age of Grace. That was still a divine secret (Eph. 3) .

The answer Jesus gave should settle our minds as to the *age* question. He addressed them, not as members of His Body, but as representatives of the coming godly Jewish remnant. That is why He speaks about the false Christs, the temple, the Judean mountains, the Sabbath day, the Great Tribulation, the fig tree, the days of Noah, the regathering of Israel to Palestine, and the coming of the Son of Man. All these things are vitally linked with the Jews. Not one of them has any connection with the Church, the Body of Christ.

I have before me a lucid explanation and, incidentally, a perfect corroboration of what I have been saying. Let me read it to you: "It is to be said that the disciples knew absolutely nothing of a Christian age. Such an age could not even begin, when they asked the question about the end of the age. They did not mean a Christian age, but their Jewish

age. All through those forty verses (Ch. 24:4-44) everything is of a Jewish character. The warning is against false Christs and false prophets; the warning given to the Church is against false spirits. The condition of salvation that one must endure to the end is nowhere given to the Christian believer, who is saved and safe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It has an entirely different meaning here. Again the prayer that the flight should not take place on the Sabbath day is Jewish, for the Christian believer has no Sabbath day, but the Lord's day. The reference to Daniel and the Great Tribulation, which never concerns the Church, but Israel, shows that we are not on Christian, but Jewish ground. The preaching which is mentioned is that of the Gospel of the Kingdom, but that Gospel is not now preached, for we preach the Gospel of Grace."

The disciples ask, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming?" Signs are uppermost in their minds. And rightly so. Elsewhere we read, "The Jews require a sign" (I Cor. 1:22). So Jesus their Lord sets before them the many signs that will precede His coming in great power and glory. I will deal with these in the next message and show how the trend of events today indicate that the return of Christ is absolutely imminent. The truth that presses itself upon my heart in closing, is that if Christ's return to earth is near, how much nearer is His return to Rapture us to Himself. We surely need to be alerted to this any-moment advent. I trust we shall purify ourselves and be morally ready for the occasion.

CHAPTER THREE

END-TIME EVENTS

IN THE PREVIOUS MESSAGES we have come to appreciate the prophetic character of the Olivet Discourse. We have noted that the disciples are seen as representatives of the future godly Jewish remnant that will be on earth when the prophecy is being literally fulfilled. To them shall be given the unspeakable privileges of evangelizing the nations by the Gospel of the Kingdom. At the same time they shall suffer greatly at the hands of their own kith and kin. However, their end is glorious. They shall be gathered back to Palestine to share in the glories of the Messianic Kingdom.

In this message the Lord is seated on the slopes of Olivet overlooking Jerusalem (Matt. 24:3). Earlier He had bemoaned Israel's blood-thirstiness and pronounced her doom. It was this which called for the questions from the disciples. "Tell us," they ask Him, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming? and of the end of the world?"

PROPHECY PINPOINTS PEOPLE

They wait eagerly upon Him for the answers. He takes the prophetic telescope in hand, focuses it upon the end-time events, and visualizes His Second Advent. The panorama before Him pinpoints the peoples who are vitally linked with the program. He divides the prophecy into three parts and deals with three different groups of people. Part one concerns the Jews (Ch. 24:4-44); the second part concerns Christendom (Ch. 24:45—Ch. 25:30); and part three brings in the Gentile nations (Ch. 25:31-46).

The careful reader of the discourse will find that all the signs related to and preceding the Second Advent, are in the Jewish section. But this is in keeping with the general

tenor of Scripture. "The Jews require a sign" (I Cor. 1:22). Signs national and international, political and religious, moral and material are linked with them. In the strictest sense of the word, signs belong to Israel. They have nothing whatever to do with the Church. She may look at them but they are not for her. She does not need them as a stimulus to faith. God's Word is her sufficiency. Her rapture to glory is not connected with times and seasons or even the prophetic time-table. At any moment she may be called to meet her Divine Bridegroom.

When Christendom—not the Church, though the Church is in Christendom by reason of her profession—is in question, the Lord cites three parables. They are (1) the parable of the faithful and evil servants; (2) the parable of the ten virgins; and (3) the parable of the man traveling in a far country who gives to his servants his goods. You notice at once the absence of signs here. Other things are involved which we shall see in due time. It is a portraiture of professions true and false. Moreover, it is not the Rapture but the Revelation that is before the Messiah's mind.

The final section takes all nations into account. They are to be called before Him when He appears in great power and glory to answer to Him for their treatment of His own brethren. This shall decide their place in the future millennial kingdom. The goat nations shall be punished; the sheep nations shall enter the kingdom and inherit life everlasting.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

The time element in the Discourse is unquestionably "the end of the age," or as Daniel so aptly expresses it, "the time of the end." This period will commence immediately upon the Church's rapture to heaven and will conclude when Messiah returns to earth to reign. It definitely includes the last seven years of Daniel's seventy weeks (490 years) prophecy though it is not necessarily limited to it. There is the strong probability that a time shall elapse between the Rapture of the Church and the signing of the seven-year covenant by the

Roman Prince with the apostate Jewish nation (Dan. 9:27). This will allow both men and nations to fit into their respective prophetic places in readiness to fulfill prophecy.

As soon as the Church is glorified a new work of grace will begin among the Jews. The blessed Spirit of God will remove the veil from their eyes and reveal Jesus as their Saviour and Messiah. I take it that He will be dealing with those souls in pre-Rapture days. In this way they will be prepared by Him not only to receive Christ but to become His testimony in the world. He will not be without a witness—"A seed shall serve Him"; thus will He perfect the work begun.

It is not my intention to deal at length with this future godly Remnant but I believe it will help if you know who they are. They come to light in the Book of the Revelation as the 144,000. God selects 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes to make up the complement. I hardly think this number is to be understood literally but rather as a figure of *Spiritual* Israel. These precious saints will be found in all parts of the world and will present a world-wide testimony. The Lord explicitly states in this Discourse that they shall be brought "from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" at the Second Advent so that in Palestine, their homeland, they may be united and blessed under His benign sway.

NATURAL ISRAEL

One of the great tragedies among Christians is their lack of understanding that God distinguishes between Natural and Spiritual Israel. This failure has led to positive confusion and the distortion of the prophetic Word. One thing you should bear in mind is that they are *all* Jews. Not one person of either Natural or Spiritual Israel is a Gentile or a Christian in this Age of Grace. Natural Israel is "after the flesh" and rejected by God; Spiritual Israel is "after the Spirit" and accepted by God. As of May, 1948, when the nation was formed, Natural Israel has been in power. I entertain no

doubt that this shall continue until Christ returns to earth. The nation is back in the land in unbelief in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this anti-Jesus Christ attitude properly prepares her to receive, in due time, the false Messiah, the Antichrist. The Lord declared, "I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). It does not require much effort to believe that as soon as the Church is gone the nation will welcome and crown Antichrist king.

You may well imagine the conflict between Natural and Spiritual Israel. If Natural Israel accepts the Antichrist as their Jehovah God, worships his image, and receives his mark, you may depend upon Spiritual Israel stoutly refusing him and every overture he makes. Their faith is in the glorified Christ at God's right hand. To Him, and to Him alone, they owe heart allegiance. But this shall lead them into the crucible of suffering. They shall be put between the upper and nether millstones of Antichrist's fury. He will seek their extermination. Many shall be called upon to surrender their lives for Jesus' sake. Like men in our own age, they will rather burn than turn. Then shall they realize the impact of the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2). In the fiery furnace of affliction they shall find the Son of God present.

The tables will turn when Christ returns in great power and glory. Immediately, the Antichrist shall be consigned to the burning flame and Natural Israel shall be removed in judgment. Its rejection by God shall be made public. Then shall dawn the day of rest and reward for Spiritual Israel as it assumes its rightful place in the kingdom.

Walter Scott writes, "The description of Zion's glory of Jerusalem's grandeur and greatness, by the Hebrew prophet (Isa. 60), is probably unequalled in the whole range of

human literature. We know nothing like it for sublimity and beauty of language, while of course its absolute truthfulness constitutes the chapter one of the most magnificent descriptions ever penned. The spiritual blessing of the people, and of all successive generations, is secured to the end of time (v. 21), while their settlement in the land is guaranteed (Ezek. 37) till the kingdom passes into the eternal state, when all time and national distinctions cease. What a future lies ahead of the Jew!"

FALSE CHRISTS

To have this background, beloved, will enable you to understand why Jesus begins to answer the questions by saying, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My Name, saying, 'I am Christ,' and shall deceive many" (Ch. 24:4-5).

It is understandable that the Jews have left themselves open for deception by their total rejection of Jesus Christ. They will not have Him to reign over them. They have lived, and still live, in the expectation of Messiah's advent. It is this attitude which makes them so vulnerable and susceptible to the deception of Satan. They have been conditioned, through unbelief, to welcome anyone who claims to be Christ, provided he shows himself a genius in politics and religion. One such Messiah came in the person of Bar-Kochba from A.D. 132-135, but instead of bringing deliverance to the nation, as he promised, he incurred death for some 500,000. It was a great blow to their pride but they persisted in unbelief.

At the time of the end false Christs shall arise. Pretentious claims shall be made and, no doubt, spectacular things shall be done with a view to deceive the unwary in the nation. Eventually, the final Antichrist shall appear and confirm his claims by calling fire down from heaven and giving breath to his image (Rev. 13). He shall be whole-heartedly accepted by the apostate nation. But not one of Spiritual Israel—those represented by the disciples to whom the Lord

spoke—will be side-tracked or deceived. His Christ *has* come. More than that, *He* has been raised from the dead and is seated upon the Father's throne. Even more, the hope of His Advent burns brightly within the heart. His manifestation is anxiously awaited. Faith in Him makes impossible Antichrist's deception. But the fact that they are Jews makes the warning necessary.

SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

With Christians in this Age of Grace, no such warning is necessary. Instead we are called upon, not to beware of false Christs but, "to try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). The Apostle then goes on to tell us how we may try the spirits. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist" (verses 2-3).

Paul speaks frankly about the "latter times" and states that "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" (I Tim. 4:1). Without controversy we know that these lawless demons are on a rampage now. They have deluded millions by their diabolical doctrines. You have but to stop a moment to consider the following of such Satanic movements as Christian Science, Unity, I Am, and Jehovah's Witnesses, (just to mention a few) to understand the present trend. Then, consider the Liberals, or Modernists, with their like-beliefs and denials of the Christian Faith! Their name is *Legion*. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly difficult in many areas to find a good, sound fundamental preacher of the Gospel of grace. I travel from place to place and find real Christians absolutely homeless—no Church home—because every minister in their town or city denies the truth of God.

It is absolutely incumbent upon all true believers in Christ

to "try the spirits." We must know those with whom we associate. If they deny the doctrine of Christ, that is they "confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" you may believe they have the spirit of Antichrist. You are then commissioned to "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 7-11). A good maxim to follow is to ask two questions about the Person and work of Christ: First, "Do you believe that Jesus is God Eternal?" Second, "Do you believe that Jesus, as Man, rose from the grave?" You will likely have an unequivocal "No."

TONGUES AND HEALINGS

At this late hour in Church history, I believe it is necessary to sound a warning note to those of like precious faith about the prevalence of the miraculous gifts of "speaking in tongues" and of "healing the sick." The physical and vocal evidences among those who make such claims leave much open to question. Moral decorum has been sadly lacking in some places. Physical contortions and vocal utterances have been altogether void of God's control. Hundreds of thousands that sought healing have been left untouched, some have actually died.

I speak in love. I would that our brethren might "try the spirits" to see whether they be of God. They will have everything to gain once they are sure from whence this mysterious, miraculous power comes. Obviously, the "speaking in tongues" is not the same as that in evidence at Pentecost. I read there that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and they "began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Those men so spake that the multitude, gathered in Jerusalem, from about seventeen different nations, heard the message in their own tongue, or language, and confessed "we do hear them speak in *our* tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:1-11). Ever since this so-called *gift* has professedly been given to some there is no evidence anywhere that any who claim this have addressed people of other

tongues in a native language. Contrariwise, those "tongues" missionaries have had to study to learn the language like all others.

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

The Lord now brings into focus the chief characteristics of the end-time. He says, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Ch. 24:6-8).

From the onset of this Discourse the Lord reveals a deep, heart interest in His own. They are exceeding precious to Him. He begins by warning them against deception; now He cautions them not to be troubled, or panicky in days of coming darkness and distress. A little later on He will advise them, in His tender consideration for them, not to make their flight from Jerusalem or Judea in the winter or even on the Sabbath day. He would not have them burdened unnecessarily by the hazards of climate or their consciences affected unduly by going beyond the prescribed distance on the Sabbath. It is all so touching. Surely they are "the apple of His eye!"

Dark days lay before the disciples. Wars and rumors of wars were to be common knowledge with them. But they were not troubled. By reason of their spiritual union with Christ they had been separated from the temple, the City Jerusalem, the land of Palestine. Their interests were vested in their exalted Lord. They rejoiced in their heavenly calling and citizenship. Their politics were in heaven from whence also they looked for the Savior (Phil. 3:20).

Much darker days lie before the godly Remnant. Although vitally linked with Christ, they are inexorably linked with the City Jerusalem and the Holy Land. They wait for Messiah's coming to negotiate all the divine purposes for them

and to make good all the divine promises. In a natural way, it might give them pain and cause them uneasiness to hear of wars and rumors of wars, and kingdom rising against kingdom, and nation against nation. They will have a keen awareness that the Gentile nations are planning to take their prized possession, Palestine. How necessary, then, that they appreciate that "no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper," that "the counsel of the ungodly shall perish." Patience shall have its perfect way with them. The time appointed shall bring back Messiah to end the dark night of the Great Tribulation and bring in the everlasting day.

HEAVENLY CALLING AND CITIZENSHIP

This great truth should encourage us upon whom the end of the ages have come. As the time of His coming draws near, we may well expect conditions to become worse and worse. In many lands today, especially those behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains, the Christians are suffering extreme hardships for Jesus's sake. There is no telling what will yet happen in countries where liberty is now experienced and every temporal mercy is at our disposal. Overnight the situation could change. But that will not change our Lord's concern for us. He lives exclusively to make intercession on our behalf. He knows all about our physical weaknesses, our spiritual hindrances, and our enemies that beset us. So He ministers support in the conflict, sympathy for our infirmities, and saving power from the clutches of sin. His ministry imparts the "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Some of us have lived through two world wars which bled the world of its young manhood. They left approximately one hundred million in death, if the total casualty list could be acquired, and in addition hundreds of millions who were adversely affected. Since then we have had minor troubles such as the Korean War and the conflicts of Britain, France and Israel against Egypt which have almost precipitated World

War III. The West Berlin problem also poses another war threat. But thus far we have been divinely preserved. I feel assured that this is the restraining hand of the Holy Spirit. Could it be that He is not going to allow the nations to engage in another world-wide war before the Church is raptured? It looks very much like it. I know that an atomic war with the release of atomic and hydrogen bombs, coupled with inter-continental ballistic missiles, will not be realized before the Rapture. This is reserved, no doubt, for the Great Tribulation era. With this in mind we are made to feel how near we are to the Rapture.

While wars and rumors of wars do not immediately concern us, because of our heavenly calling and citizenship, we have a great deal to offer men and nations by our supplications and intercessions. To stand aside from this world which murdered our Lord and which still hates Him with an insatiable hatred is our God-given portion. We must be divorced from the world's religion, its politics, its fashion, and its wars if we are to abide true to Him Whose we are and Whom we serve. We are not of the world, even as He is not of the world.

There seems to be a vital connection between these verses quoted and the opening of the sixth chapter of the Book of the Revelation. Here we have the false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. In Revelation 6 you read about the rider on the white horse which always symbolizes peace—the false peace from false Messiahs. Then comes the red horse with the rider fomenting war and bloodshed. The third horse is pale and its rider proclaims famine prices for food-stuffs. Then comes the fourth horse with its rider named Death and Hell following him. It should be remarked, too, that the similarity is perfect because the Rapture of the Church is symbolically seen in John's rapture to heaven in Chapter 4 before these four seals are opened. This connects the Olivet Discourse with the seals as post-Rapture happenings.

ISRAEL'S COMING TRAVAIL

The expression "the beginning of sorrows" (or "travails") is very suggestive. Israel's final travail is now the consideration of our Lord. He indicates that sorrow upon sorrow shall be her lot until final deliverance is experienced. Her travail shall bring Christ to birth. The Gospels assure us that she gave birth to Christ physically when He graced this scene with His presence. But she has never given Him birth morally to this moment of time. It will take the trials of the coming "time of the end" to accomplish this. Both times are in view in Isaiah's prophecy. "Before she travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a Man-Child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth and shut the womb? saith thy God" (Ch. 66:7-9). The Patmos vision of the "woman being great with child who cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered," given in drama form in Chapter 12, presents the same physical and moral birth of Christ by Israel.

God is tremendously interested in His Christ. He desires that His people, whether Israel or the Church, have Christ formed in them. To this end He creates situations to produce spiritual exercises. The Great Tribulation shall be used in the case of Israel. She shall emerge from the trial triumphantly. Christ in all His sweet and beautiful characteristics shall be displayed by her all through Kingdom days. He will write His laws in her mind and heart. Then shall all nations flow towards her. They shall be taught the ways of the Lord and walk in His paths. The Prince of Peace through His Israel shall permeate peace universally. Swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, and the nations shall learn war no more (see Isa. 2).

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

We anticipate this transformation through spiritual exercises. It is a serious matter to fail God here. I believe the Galatians did this very thing. They fell from grace and put themselves under law. No longer did they enjoy liberty in the Lord. Indeed, every spiritual blessing they had obtained by the grace of God, such as justification, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the position of sons, and the universal inheritance was questioned by them. They did not understand that the "Law was their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ." So they were greatly incapacitated to appropriate Him. I trust you will see from this incident how necessary it is to have right thoughts about Christ in order to become like Him. We must learn to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Chastisement is used by God to create spiritual exercises. The Hebrews were taught this lesson. How they suffered for Jesus's sake! Some were prone to chafe under it; others rebelled against it; but there were those who willingly submitted to it and they experienced the peaceful fruit of righteousness in their hearts (Heb. 12). In fact, the chapter makes plain that through this chastisement, or the Father's disciplinary dealings with them, they were brought to understand more perfectly the Father's heart of love, their own sonship with the Father, and a closer intimacy and fellowship with Him.

It is good to know that there are no accidents in the experience of the Christian. Everything is ordered after the counsel of God's will. He does not make any mistakes. All things are made to work for our good. Sometimes this is difficult to see, but even at our clearest, we see through a glass darkly. Our God is too good to hurt, too wise to err. He seeks ever to conform us into the image of His Son. Whatever it takes to accomplish this, He knows and allows. So, let us be still and know that He is God. One day soon, when the imperfections are erased, we shall see in *His* light and praise Him for His tender dealings with us.

SOUL-WINNING

I want to mention, in my closing word, another kind of exercise that is becoming a lost art in many lives and fundamental churches today. I refer to the exercise, or travail, for souls. How refreshing to meet with Christians, and listen to a Gethsemane and Calvary cry! With strong cryings and tears they plead with God to save sinners. And all such never go unanswered; their God commands the blessing and souls are saved! But by large and far this is rarely experienced. For the most part the prayer service is either cut out of the program or else it is a mere make-believe. Power with God is consciously absent. No travail is ever experienced. In consequence we are witnessing a dearth of conversions. Beloved, let us not be fooled in this matter. It is comparatively easy to get new church-members but to have people born-again we *must* be in travail. Could it be that right here is the reason why multitudes join our churches but never evidence spiritual life?

The Psalmist declares, "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing, precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa. 126:5-6). And Daniel says, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Ch. 12:3). So let us exercise ourselves in the matter of soul winning to gather in the golden sheaves for Christ and secure a reward for ourselves.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROBLEMS OF THE SAINTS

THREE FACETS OF divine truth in the Olivet Discourse will claim our interest in this message. I compute them as The Problems of the Saints under the headings of Persecution even unto Death, The Deceptiveness of False Prophecy, and The Perseverance of the Saints to the End of the Great Tribulation period.

The section before us reads like this: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:9-13).

You will appreciate that Jesus here presents the grim and grave responsibility of being His disciple. He tells His followers of suffering, hatreds, betrayals, and martyrdom, but they accepted His formula. They had no thought of compromise or retreat. Like their predecessors whose names are inscribed in the Hall of Fame they were tortured, not accepting deliverance . . . cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword . . . they were destitute, afflicted, tormented . . . they were unwanted in the world (Heb. 11). Almost every man

in this little group of disciples paid the supreme price for Jesus' sake.

Hundreds of thousands of others have followed in their train. They counted not their lives dear unto themselves but gladly died for Him whom they loved and served. They shared the spirit of David Brainerd who after waiting upon God in agonizing prayer said, "Here I am, Lord, send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage Pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort on earth . . . send me even to death itself if it be but in Thy service and to Thy kingdom."

Modern preaching tends to obscure the price of true discipleship. The claims of Christ in a life of separation from all that is questionable and sometimes obviously evil are seldom presented. Probably there lurks the fear that young converts in particular shall stumble as the cross is placed on their shoulders. We fear their return to the world, to a life of ease. While great care must be exercised not to cause those young in the faith to stumble, there must be the challenge of discipleship. The early Christians brooked no interference here. They shouted, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation." What wonderful Christians they made! And we shall witness the same caliber in men who know and obey the Lord. Let us never escape from the truth that it costs to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

This Olivet Discourse travels through our dispensation to post-Rapture days to find its full realization. There shall yet be a godly remnant of Jews who shall fill out this divine sketch. They shall experience the "beginning of travails," endure the titanic trial of Jacob's trouble, and be saved, or delivered, completely for the blessedness of the Kingdom Age under their Messiah.

POST-RAPTURE MARTYRS

The company before our Lord in this passage is brought into view in the Apocalypse. John beholds the first company of

martyrs under the fifth seal. His description is graphically given thus: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:9-11).

It is inconceivable to relegate these saints to either Old Testament or Church times. They belong to the End Time. In lieu of this will you kindly observe the events associated with the vision, the imagery employed by the Spirit of God, and the prayer offered by the martyrs.

The vision is part of the seven-seal revelation. These seals are broken by the Lamb subsequent to the appearance in heaven of the 24 elders (Rev. 4). I take it that the elders refer to the complement of Old and New Testament saints glorified at the Rapture (John 14:2-3; I Thess. 4:16-18). For certain, they are not angels nor are they the saints that have departed this life: none of these at this moment wears a crown or sits upon a throne.

SEAL JUDGMENTS

The seven-sealed book in the hand of uncreated Deity, written within and on the backside so that nothing more need be added to it, contains God's purposes for the earth. At this very juncture He is looking for a suitable person to negotiate His purposes. He finds that Man in Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Lamb freshly slain. He shall become the Chief Executor of all His purposes (Rev. 5).

I appraise the seal judgments as indicative of God's displeasure with both Christendom and apostate Jewry. He is

about to reward them for their rejection of His peerless Son. Let me very briefly explain the seals as I see them.

The first seal with its white horse and rider symbolizes delusion. The all-conquering rider tells of the bloodless conquest he wages by antichristian forces so as to completely deceive men by presenting a false peace. It is not difficult to see that these very forces are being arraigned for action right now. The Rapture of the saints to heaven will give them the green light.

In the second seal with its red horse and rider there smacks of revolution and blood-shed. The "peace and safety" cry of the voices heard under the first seal are now drowned by the sudden destruction that sweeps the scene: It shall be both sudden and severe. Retribution from God is now under way for the rebels left at the Rapture.

Seal number three presents the black horse and rider. Famine is generally experienced. Food prices are many times higher than normal. It is the terrifying outcome of changing the instruments of agriculture into weapons of war: The world that loves to fight must bow to famine.

The pale horse and rider are shown in the fourth seal. The picture is dreadful in the extreme. It has death for the body and hell for the soul. Here God begins to sweep clean the earth of Christ rejectors. The first divine purge takes a toll of some half a billion lives. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God.

Pandemonium and lawlessness are strongly suggested with the opening of the sixth seal. Civilization is now overboard. The lights of human governments have gone out. Darkness that can be felt now envelopes the populace.

The fifth seal seems different, but, really it is another divine viewpoint of the world in relation to the people of God. It reveals the world's utter contempt of God and His saints. The rapture of millions to heaven has not altered men's minds. This new testimony, set up by God, which calls for repentance and a readiness to meet the returning Messiah is

positively set at nought. Indeed, the world's response is the murder of the saints. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR

For a moment, glance at the imagery employed in Rev. 6:9-11. It certainly harks back to Old Testament times, to Tabernacle days. The Tabernacle in the wilderness had two altars; the brazen altar where the sacrifices were offered, and the golden altar where incense ascended to Jehovah. The brazen altar is before us now.

To me, the picture is perfect. The bodies of the saints are upon the altar. They have been sacrificed for Jesus' sake. In all probability they were killed on the streets or in their homes. Maybe they were burned to death. But in the divine reckoning they are seen on the brazen altar. Their sacrifice has been accepted. With them God is well-pleased. Instead of their bodies returning to dust and finding their place under the altar, where the ashes of the sacrifices fell, God sees their souls there. And these are still alive. For sure, their bodies have died, but, just as certain, their souls still live. Here is an incontrovertible demonstration of the imperishability of the soul.

Incidentally, may I point out that no such imagery is used about the saints that depart this life throughout the Church Age. God uses other terminology. He tells us that they are "with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). He also says that they are "absent from the body—present (or at home) with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8).

PRAYER FOR VENGEANCE

Look at the prayer in Rev. 6:10. You know at once that you are literally back on Old Testament ground. You know that this breathing partakes of the spirit of the imprecatory Psalms. The martyrs here cry for vengeance on their enemies.

It is so contrary to the spirit of Christianity which seeks forgiveness and blessing for its enemies, but the difference is simply dispensational.

Dealing with the apparent contradictions between the prayers offered in the imprecatory Psalms under the fifth seal, and ours today, one writes thus: "The key to the seeming inconsistency lies in the different character of the dispensations. The Psalms were written in an age characterized by judicial righteousness. In that age God could use Israel as His scavengers in the land of Canaan, the inhabitants of which had become so unspeakably foul that divine long-suffering could tolerate them no longer (Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-30). The people must be exterminated root and branch. Israel's own safety demanded that the moral ulcer be cut right out.

"But God is upon no such line in this age. The Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, having come into the world, all the goodness and grace of the divine heart are now told out. Grace to men of every nation is now proclaimed, with wonderful forbearance exercised towards every manner of iniquity. This attitude of divine forbearance will, ere long, be abandoned, and wrath will burst forth from heaven."

MARTYRS UNDER THE TWO BEASTS

God announces the stay of execution in Rev. 6:11. The fifth seal martyrs must exercise patience while other brethren suffer a like fate. These referred to will live in the reign of the two beasts who will make war against them, and overcome them (Rev. 13). The first beast is the political dictator of the revived ten-kingdom Roman Empire; the second beast is the ecclesiastical head of Christendom as well as the king of the Jews. Both men unite in their diabolical determination to exterminate the saints of that day. The godly Jewish remnant shall suffer much at their hands.

But God remembers. He will not forget their work and labor of love. Their supreme sacrifice given for Jesus' sake

is now to be answered in resurrection triumph and glory. As the Kingdom Age on earth begins they are called upon to share in the first resurrection and translation to the Heavenly City. There they shall enjoy the blessedness of reigning with saints of other dispensations already raptured.

I must call your attention to a remarkable Scripture which advances the truth I have just stated. Here we have the three companies brought together. I refer to Revelation 20:4. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The three companies are easily distinguished and identified. The first, or those that sit on thrones, are the Old and New Testament saints raptured to heaven and seen elsewhere in the Apocalypse as the 24 elders. The second company is the martyr host of fifth seal unveiling and the third company is the martyred band under the two beasts. Both are seen in this portion as having been resurrected and in glorified condition in readiness to reign with Christ. I like to think that as our Lord in post-resurrection days moved freely between heaven and earth so these mentioned here shall have freedom to travel between the Heavenly City and the earth all during the thousand-year reign of our Lord. The prospect surely pleases. Our God is no man's debtor.

Persecution is still the problem of saints. It tests them to the very uttermost. Yet it is the price to be paid for our link and union with the glorified Man in heaven. He is still rejected. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (I John 3:1). However, it is used to purify us, to give us divine stamina and to conform us into the image of Christ.

Some years ago I wrote a letter of comfort to a mother whose cultured, godly son was martyred by the Indians on the

Amazon River. I shall never forget her reply. "I never dreamed," she wrote, "that I would have the privilege of being the mother of a boy who shall wear a martyr's crown throughout eternity." What shall *we* wear in that coming day? It must be won now.

PROBLEM OF FALSE PROPHECY

Jesus quickly changes His theme from persecution to that of the deceptiveness of false prophecy. He makes clear that it would be a major problem for them. Because of it many would lose their heart-glow for Him; others would be in dire danger of being deceived. He says, "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And, because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24: 11-13).

From the account in the Book of the Acts it is fairly evident that the disciples were not troubled by false prophets. They were concerned with false teachers, men who crept into the Church unawares. Peter puts us wise to this when he writes: "There were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you" (II Peter 2:1).

Since apostolic times the number of false teachers is legion. At this moment they flood Christendom. With a suaveness characteristic of their father, the Devil, they appear as angels of light with their corrupting, soul-damning doctrines. No divine truth is left untouched. Every one is blatantly denied. It is difficult for most professing Christians, even born-again ones, to realize that such men are controlled by demon power, even the spirit of Antichrist. But such is true of every one who denies the Father and the Son. Our God gives them no quarter. That should be sufficient warning for us to give them a wide berth. Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son and with all those who truly love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

Evidently, in the End Time, with the nation back in Palestine it shall be troubled by false prophets. They have always been a source of trouble to Israel. But could it be otherwise? A prophecy uttered by the Lord is now on the verge of fulfillment. Note His words: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:43-45).

Since the dispersion in A.D. 70, the Jews have been free from idolatry. Now in Palestine from some 70 different countries, with varying religious backgrounds, they appear ready to welcome the power of evil in their midst. False prophets shall prepare the way for "*the false prophet*," the Antichrist, who shall lead the nation into rank idolatry. Indeed, it shall welcome this superman with all of his miraculous signs, miracles and wonders, as king, Messiah. Honors due to God alone shall be laid at his feet. It shall be deception of the highest order.

ISRAEL'S TWIN SINS

Zechariah writes illuminatingly on this very theme. He pictures Israel's spiritual condition in the End Time and as the Kingdom Age begins. "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he

prophesieth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zech. 13:2-6).

You will observe that the prophet pinpoints idolatry and false prophecy as Israel's twin sins. Both will find perfect expression in the Antichrist, the Lawless One. The Patmos Seer reveals that he shall make an image for idolatrous worship (Rev. 13). Apostate Jewry and Christendom fall for the deception. I presume that Antichrist's emissaries, the false prophets, will help in the deception. How difficult for the godly Jewish remnant to withstand such pressure! They shall be faced with certain death.

WOUNDED HANDS

This prophetic section closes on a rather strange note. "And one shall say unto him, 'What are these wounds in thine hands?' And he shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'" Is this the Lord Jesus Christ that is addressed or could it be the Antichrist? There are difficulties whichever way the verse is approached. The prophet has been speaking about the false prophets, then employs the singular in the verse preceding our text. Has he the same person in mind here? Or has he changed his line of thinking completely and turned his attention to the true Christ?

There is no difficulty in believing that God's Christ has wounded hands and that the wounds were received in the house of His friends. It was His own brethren after the flesh that nailed Him to the tree. And did He not show unto His disciples "His hands and His side?" (John 20:20). Looking towards the unveiling of His glory when He shall be

manifested to His brethren, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10), says He. Jesus is the Lamb freshly slain in the midst of the Throne (Rev. 5:6). It goes without argument that He alone shall be the Only Person in the universe of bliss with marks upon Him. They evermore proclaim His Calvary love, His supreme sacrifice offered for our redemption.

For the Antichrist to have wounds in his hands implies that they shall be self-inflicted. At this we need not wonder neither need we be alarmed. The arch-deceiver is Satan's Christ. He shall be made to represent Him in every way possible as divine revelation sets Him forth. For that reason he claims to be Jehovah the Messiah. With the Jews believing in their Messiah as One who will come in humiliation, and as both Psalm 22 and Zechariah 12 and 13 clearly reveal Him as having His hands pierced, it is altogether unlikely that this feature will escape the notice of Satan.

If Antichrist were to have wounded hands we must not confuse this with the deadly wound healed in the head of the Beast (Rev. 13:3). The Beast is the ten-kingdom Roman Empire revived. It lived and put the Lord of Glory on the cross, but it was wounded to death by the sword of her foes. For centuries the empire has been non-existent. Can you imagine what wonder shall be created when she reappears on the shores of the Mediterranean? The Antichrist, however, is a real person. Both he and the empire shall suffer eternally at the hands of God.

PROBLEM OF PERSEVERENCE

The inrush of false prophets, headed up by the Antichrist, shall create the problem of perseverance for the godly in Israel. Without question, deception and lawlessness shall be the order of the day. The restraining Spirit of God shall have been withdrawn and men shall be a law unto themselves and given over to the control of Satan.

I doubt if it is possible for us who live in the age of the

Holy Spirit with the grace of God everywhere in evidence to visualize post-Rapture days. The Holy Spirit will remove Himself with the glorified Church to Heaven. Any future dealings He has with men between then and the inauguration of the earthly Kingdom of Christ shall be undertaken from Heaven. He will operate in much the same way as in pre-Pentecostal times. However, the Great Red Dragon with his satellites, shall be cast from the heavenlies to the earth at that time and shall come here with keenest determination to destroy the sons of men. Two weapons shall be employed: He shall use the weapon of false prophecy and false doctrines and will attempt to cause world suicide. For Satan it is now or never. Mankind must be destroyed or else he will lose out completely.

This shall be the final test for saints. To withstand this onslaught shall cost the lives of many. Others, however, shall be protected miraculously by God and be waiting when the King returns. Their perseverance shall be abundantly rewarded. From this moment henceforth nothing but kingdom glories and blessedness shall be their portion. As Jesus said, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

We must not make the words of Jesus to mean that the Christian who keeps on to the end of the journey shall gain Heaven. That would certainly contradict His otherwise simple, easily-understood Word when He said: "He that heareth My Word, and believeth in Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into the condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Salvation is by grace through faith. It is God's free gift. No human merit can ever obtain it. "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9).

I do not infer that the Christian should not continue to the end of the journey. He really should. And he will if he apprehends something of the cost paid for his redemption, the present intercession of Christ in Heaven on his behalf, and

the future glories awaiting him at Christ's Second Advent. Since Christ has given His all for us, we must not think of giving less than all of ourselves to Him.

MATERIALISM AND MARTYRDOM

But we are in a testing time ourselves as the closing seconds of this age tick away. Materialism pressures us. Few can stand before it. Sacrifice for Christ is becoming virtually unknown and very undesirable. A life of ease is much preferred. For this very reason we have fewer candidates than ever for the mission fields: we are definitely not enduring the trial.

In Communist lands the pressure is brain-washing, prison, and martyrdom for Christ's sake. Pastor Wang Ming Tao, revered by all that knew him, underwent such torture at the hands of the Reds that upon his release he kept saying, "I am Judas." Later on, as he recovered strength and his mental faculties, he returned to the authorities and renounced his confession. For this both he and his wife were put back in prison.

I want you to listen to what Miss Helen Willis, one of the last to be set free by the Reds, says: "Some of the finest pastors have weakened their stand under constant pressure. This past year, Shanghai's 150 churches were consolidated by the government into 20 state churches. All too often, sermons are political speeches, stressing love for the state. Pastors cannot pray during visitation. One confessed to me 'We have to tell lies or we won't get through.' Many young people have maintained a clear witness at great personal cost. Key students have been reduced to campus servants because of their stand for Christ. When they separate, they say to each other, "We may meet inside (prison) next time." Some have been sentenced to eight and ten years in work camps, but maintain their radiance."

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRIST OR ANTICHRIST

WE HAVE REACHED the place in the Olivet Discourse where the Lord proceeds from talking about the problems of the saints to something very precious to His heart. I refer to the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Then, with the very next breath, He predicts the debut of His coming rival, the Antichrist, the great apostate.

These predictions anticipate the ministry of the two greatest personalities in human history. They are God's Christ and the devil's Christ. Listen to these prophetic words from the lips of Jesus: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)" (Matt. 24:14-15).

The disciples must have sat spellbound as the Lord pictured in panorama the prophetic future. Yet He was but answering their questions concerning the End Time signs and His appearing in glory to set up His Kingdom. Already they had heard Him tell that they must expect wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecutions, and false prophets as they approached the End of the Age. However, He promised salvation to the saints that endured. That entailed their complete deliverance from any further trials and their entrance into the everlasting Kingdom.

AMBASSADORS AT LARGE

Is it really possible for you to visualize the countenances of the disciples as they listen to their Messiah tell them that before He returns the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations? Can you detect the look of surprise? Just think that a few months before when He gave them commission to preach He strictly warned them not to go near the Gentiles but to confine their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (see Matt. 10:1-6). There were geographical limitations and boundaries. The ministry had severe restrictions. From henceforth, evidently, a difference in operation would obtain. They were to be "ambassadors at large." The world would be their parish.

It is highly probable that the Lord was preparing the disciples for the post-resurrection commission. As soon as He rose from the dead He gave them their marching orders in these well-known words: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20).

Then on Ascension Day, He said to them: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Finally, the empowering Spirit came upon them at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). They were now ready to evangelize the nations. What a ministry was theirs! They went "everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). The pattern laid down by the Lord was followed in detail. It was Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then the uttermost parts of the earth. Those flaming evangelists rapidly covered the world. Paul infers this in his letter to the Colossians when

he says: "The Gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world," and "The Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Ch. 1: 6, 23). This was a phenomenal achievement.

FINGER OF INDICTMENT

As I meditate upon the work accomplished by those men I feel the finger of indictment pointing directly at the Church. They knew nothing of modern transportation nor did they have microphones or radios. Their only Book was the Old Testament, for the New Testament was not completed and compiled until after their day. They possessed no literature for distribution. Yet they covered the world! We have everything at our finger tips. Think of the many translations of the entire Bible, tracts, books, all kinds of interesting material for work among children; cars, trucks, planes, radio stations, thousands of missionaries in foreign lands, as well as our highly-trained personnel in Bible institutes, Bible colleges and universities, our mission schools and hospitals. And still millions upon millions sit in heathen darkness. What shame and reproach should be ours!

A short time ago I visited West Berlin. I saw thousands of refugees that were fortunate enough to escape the Red menace. Many of them were born during the Nazi regime and were incorporated into the Soviet sphere of influence after World War II. They honestly confessed that they knew nothing about the Bible and never had they heard the Name of Jesus Christ mentioned. In one of my African missionary conferences I was told of four native chiefs that walked a long distance to ask the missionaries to come to them. They would help them build churches and mission houses if they would tell them about God. While help was promised it was only too evident that there was none available. It is as true now as in the days of our Lord, "the fields are white unto harvest—the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

EVANGELIZATION OF WORLD—WHEN?

I know a number of missionary enthusiasts who believe that the passage we are considering means that the Lord cannot return until the world and all the different tribes are evangelized. They use this verse to urge Christians to dedicate their lives to God for missionary work and to give liberally of their means to finish the task in hand. Now I want it put on record that I strongly believe in getting the job of world evangelization done as speedily and effectively as possible, but I disagree with those who use this verse to that end.

It must be very disheartening to all who entertain this belief to know that the Church is losing ground every passing year. Our missionaries are now prohibited entrance into countries in Asia and Europe, which alone account for well above one billion persons. It is also officially stated that with our world population expansion we have above 40 million extra people born each year to whom we have little, if any, access with the Gospel. Then, too, there are some fourteen hundred tribes whose languages have not been reduced to writing or cannot be spoken by us. At least half a century or longer will be needed to allow us to tell them about redeeming love. If our Lord cannot come till all this is done, then we have a forlorn hope. At the present ratio it means that He will never return.

IS WORLD EVANGELIZATION NOW?

We have another group of Christians that inform us that this Matthew 24:14 is being literally fulfilled in this Age of Grace. They aver that Jews and Gentiles are on the same footing before God, that those who believe in Christ become members of the One Body, and that when Christ returns He will wind up world affairs by relegating men to their destiny and initiate the celestial scene. These people call themselves "A-Millennialists."

It is hardly the time or place to state some of the fantastic interpretations of Scripture, especially of the prophetic Word, held by these people. They dogmatically assert that the prophecies which speak so specifically of Israel's second return to Palestine, with all its subsequent blessing for themselves and the nations, has been fulfilled already. For instance, they err concerning the prophecy by Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall 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 and from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:11-12). These things, they say, were realized at Pentecost when the different nations, represented by the Jews, came to Jerusalem. As for the Gentiles, we are told that the promise to Abraham, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and the prophecies which speak of blessing for the Gentiles are now being realized.

Such a belief immediately rules out all possibility of the Jews returning to their land to experience the Great Tribulation horror or the return of Christ to establish an earthly kingdom for 1,000 years when both the Gentile and Jewish nations shall be blessed. And, of necessity, it strikes off the list of future events the godly Jewish remnant that shall carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

WORLD EVANGELIZATION—FUTURE?

To accept such teaching is to make void the plain statements of prophecy. I assert most emphatically that nobody can begin to understand the Word, as God has given it, that would so spiritualize it. There are so many things that must needs be literally fulfilled that any other interpretation must be wrong. For instance, if the seige of Jerusalem in A.D. 70

were the worst event in Jewish history—the Great Tribulation—what about Hitler’s slaughter of six million Jews? When did the Jews return to possess Palestine, the promised possession, since Jeremiah’s prediction in Chapter 30? When did all nations gather together against Jerusalem as so clearly stated by Zechariah (ch. 14)? When did the Gentile nations bask in the favor of God’s King and bring their trophies to His pierced feet as the Psalmist so graphically describes (Psa. 72)? And what about the 1,000-year reign of Messiah when Satan shall be consigned to the bottomless pit, the saints shall reign, and at its close the dead shall be raised and Satan shall be sent with all unconverted humanity to the lake of Fire (see Rev. 20:1-7)? In all fairness to the Word, we must reject all meaningless teaching with its fanciful interpretation of Scripture. We must adhere to the simple and obvious meaning of Scripture.

Incidentally, every Old Testament quotation used in the New Testament to indicate blessing for the Gentiles has millennial times in view for final fulfillment. It is simply lifted out of its context and applied to the Church age. This is one of the sovereign acts of the Holy Spirit who definitely states that “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation” (II Peter 1:20).

Beloved, it is my confirmed conviction, after studying the different beliefs abroad, that this fourteenth verse of Matthew 24 still awaits its full realization. It shall come in post-Rapture days. First, the Lord shall remove the Church from earth to glory then begin His gracious work with His earthly people, the Jews. They shall accept the responsibility of publishing world wide the Gospel of the Kingdom.

THE 144,000 WORLD EVANGELISTS

It could very well be possible that the removal of millions to glory shall finalize God’s dealings with many Jews and Gentiles for their conversion. How else will they interpret this intervention in world affairs than that Jesus is the Son of

God, the King of Israel. The impact upon the Jewish remnant shall be tremendous. Their conversion shall be quickly demonstrated as they begin their testimony among men. Circumstantial evidence abounds that they shall sell themselves out to Christ. No road shall be too rough, no difficulty too hard, no service too arduous, no sacrifice too great for them. Empowered by the Spirit of God, and motivated by their love to Christ, they shall press out to the uttermost parts of the earth to announce the coming of the King. Their message shall be "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

These Gospellers are pinpointed for us by the Holy Spirit as the 144,000. John saw this company sealed immediately preceding the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7). The sealing means that they shall be preserved throughout the entire Tribulation era. It shall last for three and one half years according to both Daniel and John. It should be understood that the 144,000 do not come into being at the hour of their sealing. To be Scripturally correct, since this company is not to be taken literally but rather as a figure of Spiritual Israel, it has its commencement in the Jews that are saved after the Rapture.

GOD'S TWO WITNESSES

Two messengers of Spiritual Israel are specially mentioned in the Revelation as the two witnesses (Ch. 11). They are said to be the two Olive trees and the two Candelsticks. In other words, they are men filled with the Holy Spirit and Divine Light. They are men of exceptional spiritual ability and with power irresistible. The miracles wrought by them, and their ministry which will condemn the Antichrist and his cohorts, shall make indelible impressions upon all. Then the fact that they are assigned by God to minister in Jerusalem, the captial of Antichrist's kingdom, shall bring them into the public eye. Their lives shall be sought many times without success, which shall add to their conspicuousness.

I know that many saints believe these two men to be either Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Elijah. This viewpoint I do not share. As far as I am concerned, the Lord Jesus settles the question once for all. You remember when He was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James and John He admonished them to "tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things! But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise also shall the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:9-13).

Some might ask the question, "If John the Baptist is the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy, and the prophet's word must be interpreted as the Baptist coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, how then could he come 'before that great and dreadful day of the Lord?'" (Mal. 4:5, 6). The answer is simple if the prophetic word is properly understood. In prophecy, time it is not reckoned when Israel is out of fellowship with God. We know that Israel was cut off when Messiah died. Daniel had prophesied that a period of 483 years would transpire between the rebuilding of the city Jerusalem and the Messiah's death. He also stated that a period of seven years shall be fulfilled at the End of the Age. However, between the 483 years and the final seven years there is an interim of nearly 2,000 years in which the Church is being called out of the world. Israel was "cut off" when the Church began and she will come into the divine favor again after the Church is glorified. With Israel's restoration to God shall come the Great Tribulation followed by the great and dreadful Day of the Lord. So the Baptist, according to the prophetic timetable, immediately precedes this day. Prophetic timetables take no notice of the Church Age.

WORLD EVANGELISM ACCOMPLISHED

It could be that these two men portray the power and prestige of Spiritual Israel. If so then we can easily believe that, like the Apostles, they will "turn the world upside down." And they will do so in very short notice! To me, this is the secret of world evangelization.

John is given the vision of a great multitude washed in the blood and entering the Kingdom Glorious after the sealing of the 144,000. It is a description of the effectiveness of their ministry. But let me read the passage to you: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9-10).

NO SECOND CHANCE

Now I know that some will question this interpretation and declare that it provides a second chance to be saved after Christ returns. On the surface you appear to be right. But the Word makes it crystal clear that there is no salvation for anyone who definitely refuses Christ after He comes. And that goes for both Jew and Gentile. The passage I refer to reads like this: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:10-12).

I take it, then, in perfect consistency with the Scriptures, that the 144,00 sealed Jews and the innumerable host of saved Gentiles had never definitely and positively rejected Christ in the Day of Grace.

GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

A few moments ago I mentioned that these flaming evangelists would take up the ministry of the Baptist, Jesus our Lord, and the early disciples, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You will notice that the exact wording of the passage under consideration is "this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached . . ." Now it is true that in Mark's Gospel the record simply states "This Gospel must first be published among the nations" (Mark 13:10), but there was no Gospel other than that of the Kingdom. As yet the Gospel of the Grace of God, as we have come to know and understand it, was not known. Jesus had not yet died and been raised from the dead and glorified.

We cannot escape the truth that whether people were saved under the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, or that of the pure sovereign grace of God, they were "saved by grace, through faith" (Eph. 2:8). God cannot save men any other way. No human merit avails with Him in this matter. Paul adduces this fact when he writes of the salvation or justification of both Abraham and David. Abraham lived before the law; David many years after it; but both were saved by grace through faith (Rom. 4:1-6). The Lord Jesus speaking to Nicodemus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The exclusive right to enter the Kingdom was by the new birth. This is an all-time necessity. Nicodemus lived in the days when the Kingdom Gospel was proclaimed.

Throughout the Acts, the Apostles preached this Gospel. Paul, addressing the Ephesian elders, declared, "I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God . . ." (Acts 20:25). Then Luke gives us a last look at Paul in Rome where he "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God" (Acts 28:30-31). This ministry, evidently, was Paul's during his entire life.

GOSPEL OF GRACE

The Gospel of the Grace of God, as Paul brings to light in his Ephesian letter, leads us to the highest height in the divine purpose. It is something much in advance of simply being born again. All Old Testament saints were born again and therefore subjects in the Kingdom of God but they never heard about being dead and risen with Christ and seated in Christ in the heavenlies. This portion is for those born again between Pentecost and the Rapture. It is the fullest revelation of divine grace and linked with the eternal purpose.

The godly remnant in post-Rapture days will not be able to preach about believers being baptized into the One Body, or even hold out the hope of Rapture to heaven at the coming of Christ. Their main purpose shall be to call people to repentance and to faith in the unseen, yet coming, Christ so that they might be ready to enter the earthly millennial Kingdom. In the days of their ministry the Antichrist shall be in power and leading the people into rankest idolatry. It should not be wondered at that they shall proclaim, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:7). It is the call to turn from him who shows himself that he is God (II Thess. 2:3-6), to the Lord Jesus who is "God over all, blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5).

The Israeli government in power shall treat the message and messengers with disdain. Already, Antichrist has been crowned king of Israel and confessed to be their only Messiah. The veil is still over the nation's face. But, as always, individuals in the nation, and Jews living in other countries, shall respond to the message. It is this company of converted Jews that is known as the 144,000.

ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Now the Lord turns from speaking about the godly remnant, the 144,000, that shall publish the Gospel of the King-

dom in all the world to their great antagonist and persecutor, the Antichrist. He says: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)" (Matt. 24:15).

This diabolical act of the Antichrist shall in no wise surprise the godly Jews. They shall be perfectly acquainted with Daniel's prophecy and its profound prophetic meaning: "And 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 desolate" (Dan. 9:27). "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (Dan. 12:10-11).

The eyes of the godly remnant shall see and their minds shall understand the times in which they live, like the men of Issachar, when the seven years' covenant is signed between the Roman prince and ungodly Israel (Dan. 9:27); they shall know that after three and a half years from the signing of the covenant, the darkest hour in world history will strike. It shall initiate Armageddon, and they shall be prepared.

It is quite obvious from the prophetic Scriptures that the Antichrist shall claim absolute deity and pose as Israel's Messiah. Paul declares that he "opposes and exalteth himself . . ." (II Thess. 2:4). To substantiate his claim he performs two miracles: First, he calls fire down from heaven such as Elijah did on Mt. Carmel to prove that he is God (Rev. 13:13; I Kings 18). Second he gives breath to the image he makes to correspond with the breath God Almighty gave to the dust when He created Adam in His own image and likeness (Rev. 13:15; Gen. 2:7).

CLAIM TO DEITY

His claim to deity after his two miraculous acts in the presence of the people will take place officially when he enters the Holy Place in the Jerusalem temple and poses himself as God. This our Lord speaks of as the "abomination of desolation." It is an act of blasphemy, the work of the world's greatest apostate. In fact, this is the ultimate in Christendom and Jewry's apostasy from God. Both shall accept and worship Antichrist as God.

How we praise God that we have been brought to know and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as God over all blessed forever more (Rom. 9:5). The mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, has been revealed to us (II Tim. 3:16). This has brought us salvation and the new birth. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (I John 5:1). And now with Thomas of old we bow in the presence of Him Who has the wound marks in His hands and side and exclaim, "My Lord and My God."

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRIBULATION— THE GREAT ONE

THE THEME of our present message is the Tribulation—the great one. I am sure its importance is appreciated by every true child of God. It is also of supreme interest to the student of prophecy. No one can afford to by-pass it or to be indifferent to it. I suggest that the whole life of the Christian is affected by what he believes in connection with this important world-wide event which now looms before the eyes of the present generation. For sure, the Tribulation, the great one, is around the corner.

Now let us turn to Matthew 24 and read verses 15 to 22 which we shall consider at this time. You understand that the Lord is still addressing His disciples on the slopes of Olivet and explaining what will happen at the End of the Age. He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened,

there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

A quick survey of this portion indicates four significant truths. First, the Lord speaks about the unmistakable sign which shall precede the world trial. The Antichrist shall appear in the Jerusalem temple and reveal himself as God. This is the abomination of desolation (v. 15). Second, He brings into relief the unfailing shelter the fleeing godly Remnant shall find in the mountains, a place specially prepared by Him (v. 16). Third, He gives evidence afresh of the unchanging sympathy He has for those who are in the throes of trouble. He instructs them what they must not do if their lives are valued by them (vs. 17-20). And fourth, He pictures, in the most dramatic fashion ever, the unprecedented sorrow that shall envelope mankind when the Great Tribulation breaks (vs. 21-22).

THE UNMISTAKABLE SIGN

In my last message I briefly referred to this significant sign. It particularly concerns the godly Jews living in the domain of the Antichrist. He has assumed his place upon the throne of David as Israel's Messiah and turned the hearts of the populace to himself. But suspicion of him is abroad. The godly Jews know who he is. They have been fore-warned by the Holy Spirit through the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, they have unveiled him to the nation by their dynamic preaching. Their obstinacy to bow to him, in any manner derogatory to their God-given faith, will arouse national questioning. So, in attempting to prove to all that he is the true Messiah, the covenant-keeping God, even God over all, blessed for ever, he takes his place in the temple and manifests himself as God. His act precipitates the greatest crisis in world history.

Daniel tells us that the "abomination of desolation" shall be offered in the temple in the middle of the seventieth week (Dan. 9:27). To validate his claim he will call fire down

from heaven. Now it may be coincidental, nevertheless it is true, that this is the exact time Satan is cast out of the heavens and comes down to earth (Rev. 12). Jesus Himself foresaw this event and said he came down like lightning, or as a ball of fire (Luke 10:18). Such a potent miracle would produce the effect of causing the people to say, "This is our God."

But the middle of the week will witness the image, made by the Antichrist which will both breathe and speak. Most likely it shall be made of clay and thus correspond to the man made in Eden. Since man is the divine masterpiece we readily perceive the Satanic delusion here.

It is absolutely necessary for you to know that the seven-year covenant between the revived Roman Empire's dictator and the mass of ungodly Jews in Palestine under the Antichrist determines the strength of affinity between them. This covenant is really to deter the King of the North, and all his cohorts, from invading Palestine. And it does, at least for three and one-half years more! It is the middle of this period, when Antichrist shows himself as God in the temple, that the prophesied Great Tribulation begins. To be more explicit, so that you may know what I am talking about, this is the moment when relations between East and West break and the entire human race becomes involved in its titanic death-struggle.

The godly remnant shall read the sign. It shall be God's "green light" to them. At once they shall flee to the mountains from the city, Jerusalem, and from their homeland by God-given right. This is an act of faith. But they will remember the words of this Olivet Discourse and put them into practice.

THE UNFAILING SHELTER

You will look in vain across the pages of sacred history to find where the Lord did not provide a place of shelter in a crisis. He always anticipates what will happen. He is never

taken by surprise. Take the case of the flood. How sweetly and thoughtfully God admonished Noah to make an ark for the salvation of his house (Gen. 6; Heb. 11:7). Then read the enthralling episode in connection with the destruction of the ungodly cities of the plain and the ministry of angels in rushing Lot and his wife and daughters to the mountain for safety (Gen. 19). I think, too, of the cities of refuge where the man-slayer—one who slew his fellow unwittingly—found a haven of rest (Num. 35).

The Great Tribulation period shall provide another occasion for God to manifest His care for His own. He delights in them. They are all He has in this vile world. So He prepares for them a dwelling place, a shelter from the threatening storm. I know it is true that these dear ones have found in the Man Christ Jesus a shelter from the judgment of God; He became this to them upon their acceptance of Him as their Saviour and Lord. Then they were able to see that He was wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities, chastised for their peace, and striped for their healing (Isa. 53:5). Here also God works in providence for them.

PETRA—THE ROCK CITY

The belief obtains among evangelicals that the godly Remnant in Jerusalem, and its environs, shall find a refuge in Petra, the rock city, in the land of Edom, which is now in Trans-Jordan. This rock city was the former abode of the Edomites. They believed the fortress to be impregnable. Their attitude toward God and Israel was one of defiance. They deliberately refused Israel passage through their land when they were en route to Canaan (Num. 20:18-21). They fought against both king Saul and king David (I Sam. 14:47; II Sam. 8:13-14). Finally, they aided Nebuchadnezzar to expedite Israel's captivity (Isa. 34:5-8). For such conduct God overthrew them and left their rock-city desolate.

The city is situated close to Jerusalem so within comparatively easy access to the fleeing Remnant. It has facilities for

many thousands—some estimate as high as 100,000. The rock city is 500 feet high and has more than 800 rock-cut tombs, or hiding places. It is shut away from the public thoroughfare and might well prove to be the unfailing shelter for God's own.

Daniel makes it clear that this entire area shall be immunized from the holocaust of Great Tribulation days. In modern terms it shall be looked upon as a "neutral zone." The prophet says that the King of the North "shall enter also into the glorious land (that is Palestine) and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" (ch. 11:41). When you read elsewhere that the Great Tribulation shall be world-wide and try every man, you cannot but wonder why this part of the world, so close to the center of the fiery burning furnace, should escape. Here is the one green spot on the otherwise scorched earth. I suggest that the reason is the presence of the godly Remnant in that part. Our Lord knows how and where to preserve His own. His ways are past finding out.

THE KINSMAN AVENGER

At this point I want to point out to you another tremendously interesting prophecy written by Isaiah some 2,600 years ago. He is depicting the return in great power and glory of Messiah as the Kinsman-Avenger. In another chapter (53) he has presented Him as the Kinsman-Redeemer. Now let me read the first four verses of this 63rd chapter: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample

them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

The picture is very beautiful, and, to say the least, most encouraging especially for the godly Remnant, then in Edom. It portrays Messiah's return to Jerusalem to overthrow Antichrist and his devotees, then quickly to carry on to Edom and bring back His exiled ones to their beloved city that they might enjoy His everlasting favor. The "garments dyed in blood" in this chapter has no reference to Calvary. It is not the Blood of the Lamb. Rather it is the blood of the Arabs. Divine vengeance is poured out upon them and they are utterly defeated. The land they have possessed, from Jordan to the Euphrates, shall be surrendered and given back to godly Israel, or the 144,000, as part of the promised inheritance.

Pardon this parenthetical remark, but it is apropos. With the removal of the Antichrist and his government there shall be selected from among the 144,000 those capable of forming a government wholly in league with Messiah and the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven. Most likely those selected shall be those that have suffered most for their Lord in the day of rejection. So the Lord is no man's debtor.

But to return to the rock-city, or the unfailing shelter in the wilderness. The Patmos Seer throws divine light on how Jehovah will care for His own there. He says "The woman (or another picture of the godly remnant elsewhere seen as the 144,000) fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there 1,260 days." Farther down this same chapter we read, "To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (Ch. 12:6, 14).

SHELTER AND SUSTENANCE

To flee to a barren rock, without supplies of any kind as the godly remnant must do, looks like suicide. But it shall not be so. The Lord pledges Himself to look after them. He shall provide the necessities of life for the three and one-half years they are there. I trust you shall observe the play on the word "wilderness" in the two verses I quoted a moment ago. This is not without meaning. It seems almost certain that God is saying, "As I fed your forefathers in the wilderness with manna from heaven, so I will feed you with food convenient." After all, this godly Remnant is repeating history. Their forefathers were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb then brought into the wilderness for 40 years before they entered the promised land. Now these precious saints have experienced their redemption by the blood of Jesus, the true antitypical Lamb; they have been brought into Edom, likened unto a wilderness, and ultimately they shall be brought into the promised possession. Why, then, should they not experience miraculous intervention of God in supplying all their needs? Why not again feed upon manna from heaven? Certainly the One who provided the shelter shall provide the sustenance.

I cannot refrain from saying that if our Lord undertook for Isarel in days past, and shall yet display His grace and power in providing for them in days ahead, we need entertain no fear as to His ability and willingness to meet all our needs in this life. The One Who has taken care of our eternal needs is sufficient to take care of our temporal ones. So, beloved, let us not resort to unbelief, or to man-made schemes to obtain money, either for ourselves or the work of the Lord in our hands, but rather let us trust Him. He always enjoys being trusted. Remember the promises: "No good thing shall He withhold from those that walk uprightly" (Psa. 84:11); and, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

THE UNCHANGING SYMPATHY

I have met some people who imagine that because God is so high and holy, the mundane things of this life are below His notice and care. Let me hasten to say that this idea is as far from the truth as East is from the West. If you stop for a moment to consider the whole scheme of redemption, the infinite cost of every blood-bought child of His, and the glorious future promised him, you cannot but feel that this God must be interested in every detail of our lives. And He is. He numbers the hairs of our heads; He puts our tears in a bottle; He numbers our days. More than that, He looks upon us as the apple of His eye, as members of His Body, as His own chosen Bride.

It is the great thought of Christ's unchanging sympathy, His painstaking care for His own, that is elucidated in our next verses. Read them again, beloved. Let their meaning sink deep down into your heart. Jesus said, "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:" (Matt. 24:17-20).

REDEEMING THE TIME

The thing that presses itself upon my spirit as I read and re-read these words is the preciousness of time. The time element plays a large part in this exhortation. Once the disciples see the sign, they must act with speed. There must be no delaying action—no turning back for either food for the journey, clothes to keep them warm, or money to purchase supplies en route to their destination. Time is at its highest premium ever.

Is it possible for you to visualize this mass of humanity pressing out of Israeli, hastening along the highways of Trans-Jordan that lead to the divine place of refuge? Can you see

them without provisions, either food or clothing, to meet present or future needs? What a sight to behold! Yes, but God sees the one thing needful for this moment. He sees their faith. They have dared to believe God and flee. The rest is God's responsibility. The One Who opened the Red Sea for their deliverance, Who opened the heavens and rained down manna, Who split open the flinty rock so that water gushed out, Who preserved both their clothes and sandals, is the One Who is with them now. He will not fail them.

Beloved, how do we value *time*? Are we "redeeming the time" in these evil days? So many saints give themselves to self-aggrandizement—to building bigger and better homes and all that goes with them—that they have little, if any, time for the things that really matter. Our fellow men are perishing all around us. The heathen are multiplying with terrifying quickness. Nations, too, are being pressed into their prophetic positions in readiness to move after the Church is raptured to glory. Men's hearts are failing them for fear because of the things that are happening today. Everything points to the imminent return of our Lord. How shall He find us when He returns? Let us give ourselves to Him and to His work so that we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

We should learn the lesson from the fleeing remnant. Let us not be too concerned about food and raiment. If we seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, let us depend upon God to supply all the necessities of life.

SUCCOR AND SYMPATHY

The Lord shows how He shall succor and sympathize with the Remnant. He says, "Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days." That is very precious. He sympathizes with the expectant mother and with the one whose child is drawing sustenance from her. In the long ago, when He was very young, His mother after the flesh had to flee from Herod. Just as she, with the child, was

sustained, so will those dear ones be sustained in tribulation times. Jesus their Great High Priest shall succor them in the trial (Heb. 2:18); He shall sympathize with them in their infirmities (Heb. 4:14-15); and He shall save them to the very uttermost, or to the end of the journey (Heb. 7:25).

Note the next statement: "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day" (v. 20). Whoever said that this portion of Scripture speaks of the Church? The fact that the Lord mentions the *Sabbath* should be sufficient to any intelligent thinking Christian, who knows anything at all about the difference between the Jew and the Church, to realize that only the believing Jew is in mind. The Sabbath always connects itself with Israel whether in the past or in the Tribulation era or even the Millennium. It has no place in the Church Age. The Lord's Day, the Resurrection Day, is hers. So the Lord has respect for the Remnant's conscience as travel is undertaken. A Sabbath day's journey was about two miles—a distance too negligible with such colossal risks at stake. Then the winter would create hazards quite unnecessary on top of all the other burdens to be borne.

THE UNPRECEDENTED SORROW

Now the climax is reached. Everything before this has been but preparatory. He breaks the news with the dramatic pronouncement that "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

This is zero hour. The grim specter of the bloodiest war in all history is now upon humanity. This is when East meets West. This is when the Great Red Dragon and his satellites will put forth their diabolical might to exterminate the human race. This is when the godly Remnant in all lands shall be pressed almost beyond measure. This is the moment when

Israel shall be brought to the point of near-annihilation. This is the beginning of the end of Man's Day. This is the prelude to the great and dreadful Day of the Lord when He shall return with His glorified saints and holy angels to usher in His world-wide Kingdom.

No event has more predictions than the Tribulation, the great one. It is stated in a thousand-and-one different ways and is voluminously illustrated on the pages of sacred history. Many types of the event are in evidence throughout both Testaments. However, Jeremiah is specific in saying it is the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Ch. 30:7). Daniel assures us that Michael shall stand up for Israel on this occasion when total extermination is determined by the enemy (Ch. 12:1-2). Jesus makes clear in the Olivet Discourse that all humanity shall be in jeopardy of extinction but for the timely intervention of God (Matt. 24:21-22). In the Book of the Revelation we have the promise to the Church that she shall be kept from the hour (Ch. 3:10), and then we behold the innumerable host of saved Gentiles emerge safely from the fiery furnace to enter the Kingdom Glorious (Ch. 7:9-17).

ALIGNMENT OF THE NATIONS

I believe that one of the greatest assets to understanding the truth about the Great Tribulation, which will eventuate in the Battle of Armageddon, is to know something about the alignment of the nations at that particular time. I will therefore take this opportunity of quoting to you from my own booklet entitled "Is Armageddon Near?" which deals with this particular phase of things.

"A second important factor in the consideration of our topic is the divine revelation given concerning the alignment of the nations which meet in bloodiest conflict for the last time in world history.

"The general over-all picture of the nations before Armageddon suggests that the world is divided into East and West. You will not find this truth in one specific statement but in

placing the piecemeal prophetic revelation together, that is exactly as it shall be. There shall be separate confederacies known by us as spheres of influence. Here is how they are presented:

“First on the prophetic agenda is the restoration of the Jewish people to Palestine and to the status of a nation. Without trying to be dramatic or sensational let me say again that these things have been accomplished. On May 14, 1948, for the first time in almost twenty-five centuries, the Jews became a nation and a few months later they were welcomed in to the United Nations Organization. This event began a series of developments among the nations which predicate an early fulfillment of prophecy.

“Take Russia as a concrete example. Who among us has not been surprised by her phenomenal rise to power? We have watched her population increase in some ten years from about 170,000,000 to above 830,000,000. And the end is not yet! Yet we should not be affected by the merest element of surprise if we believe what the prophet Ezekiel predicted about her. He gave us the blueprint for Russia’s future some 2500 years ago and it appears as if the whole plan is being speedily executed before our eyes.

“It appears quite probable that Russia shall incorporate the help of the Asiatics in the final showdown. At least both move toward Palestine at one and the same time—in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week.

“In the West there shall be the revived Roman Empire, backed up by Great Britain, her colonies, the United States of America and her peoples, and headed up under one supreme Dictator. This man receives his power and authority from Satan. Such shall be his control over men in the west particularly that they will cry, “Who is like unto the Beast? Who is able to make war with him?” But this challenge is accepted by the king of the North and the kings of the rising sun. It brings Armageddon into focus.

“The above line-up of nations makes the picture clear. The

North and East align against the South, or Egypt, and West. Their rendezvous is Armageddon. Here Communism and Democracy meet to decide their controversy. Evidently they cannot agree to live peacefully side by side. One or the other must succumb.

“Actually, however, Armageddon is God’s controversy with the nations. He has not forgotten their treatment of His Son at Calvary. Nor has He failed to take knowledge of their present attitude toward Him. The psalmist rends the veil and discovers the secret of all man’s anarchy and rebellion against God: ‘Why do the heathen, or nations, rage, and the people, or Jews, imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, ‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.’

“Because of men’s antagonism to God and His Christ, He says, ‘I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle.’ And once more the Patmos seer shows us what is back of the scenes at this time. ‘I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirit of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . . And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.’

“With Satan and his satellites cast down from Heaven prior to this final conflict, and coming upon men in all of their fierceness and fury, men’s hatred of God shall know no bounds. It shall be an all-out attack against Him to overthrow Him once for all. But the battle is God’s, not man’s. For this reason He cries, ‘Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the

valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.' ”
(Joel 3:13-16).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ELECT IN THE TRIBULATION

THE TRIBULATION, the great one, was the highlight and headline of the last message. It will begin in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week when the Antichrist presents himself as God in the Jerusalem temple. Simultaneously the devil and his satellites are ousted from the heavenlies, their present abode to the earth. They come down fully determined to exterminate the human family. The program gets under way when the King of the North and his eastern allies meet the King of the South and the revived Roman Empire in the land of Palestine. Evidently, everything works according to the devil's plan, when, suddenly the Christ of God appears in great power and glory to take issue with the Antichrist, the nations of earth, and apostate Jewry before He initiates His world-wide Kingdom.

You appreciate that there was no time left to answer the question uppermost in Christian circles today. I refer to the question, "Will the Church escape the Great Tribulation?" So, before I present the main message, I will take a few minutes to answer the question. I want to do this because of its urgency and importance. We are all aware that we are living in the days when, most probably, East shall meet West—when the Battle of Armageddon shall be fought. Why should we have any doubt as to what is the Lord's purpose for us? It affects our whole purpose in life if we know that we are either going to escape, or go through, this final blood-path. Personally I believe, and I have come to this conclusion after

much exercise of heart and a study of the Scriptures, that the Church will escape the Great Tribulation. Briefly, then, here are some of my reasons.

WHY THE CHURCH ESCAPES THE GREAT TRIBULATION

1. The Church, which began at Pentecost and is completed at the Rapture, is entirely outside the prophetic sphere. There is no prophecy, even to the minutest detail, connected with her. All prophecy is vitally linked with Israel. Since the Great Tribulation comes within the range of prophecy then the Church must necessarily be off the scene. If you examine Daniel 9:24-27 you will see clearly that the 490-year prophetic period is related to the Jews, or Israel, and the holy city, Jerusalem.

2. The Church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit Who acts through her as the Divine Restraint according to II Thessalonians 2:6-7, must be raptured before the Lawless One, the Antichrist, makes his debut. No other interpretation of this passage quite fits the case. The Holy Spirit in the Church is the only Person Who has been in the world to suppress lawlessness since Apostolic times and His removal with the Church shall make way for Antichrist's manifestation. Then shall the Great Tribulation get under way.

3. The Church is promised deliverance from the wrath to come. The wrath to come is evidently the Great Tribulation. It is the moment when the vials of the wrath of God are poured upon the world (see I Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 16). More than that, the Church is promised deliverance from "the hour" that shall try the whole earth (Rev. 3:10). That is very specific. It predicates the Rapture before "the hour" strikes:

4. The Church is completely freed from God's program for Israel. She has nothing to do with her ceremonies, her customs, or her calendar. Never once is the Church seen linked with Jerusalem, the temple, or animal sacrifices, and never has she kept the Sabbath. However, in Great Tribula-

tion days, specific mention is made of all these things. Jerusalem, the temple to be rebuilt, the sacrifices, and the Sabbath loom largely then. You will discover that if you read carefully the first 22 verses of Matthew 24. It indicates that Israel, not the Church, has the spotlight.

5. The Church has a distinct message to proclaim throughout this dispensation of grace. It is the message of the grace of God, this message of reconciliation (see II Cor. 5:14-21). But, beloved, this is not the message proclaimed in the Great Tribulation era. Concretely, the message then is "Fear God, and give glory to Him: for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:7). Observe that the two witnesses, mentioned in Revelation 11, work miracles of death and destruction on their enemies. These men are ministers in Great Tribulation days! They could never, no never, belong to the church. Indeed, they are saved Jews and belong to Israel.

6. The Church, at the coming of the Lord, has its program outlined. First, upon the reunion of dead saints resurrected and all living saints they shall be raptured to meet the Lord in the air (I Thess. 4:16-17). Second, they shall be arraigned before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive their rewards in view of reigning with Christ in the everlasting Kingdom (II Cor. 5:10). Third, they shall be transferred from the air to the Father's House above, their home, sweet home (John 14:1-3). Fourth, they shall be taken to the marriage of the Lamb where, as the Church, she shall be united in holy wedlock with her Bridegroom (Rev. 19:7-9). Then, fifth, they shall appear with Christ in all His glory (I Thess. 3:13). These things are her concern while the Great Tribulation rages on earth.

7. The Church must be removed from the world before the period of "gross darkness" envelopes the human race (Isa. 60:2). This condition fittingly describes men in the Great Tribulation, but quite impossible while the Church

is here. She is in the place of Christ, the Light of the world. There might be, and there is the falling away from divine things, while the Church is on earth, but "the apostasy" awaits the Church's withdrawal to glory.

8. For the Church to go through the Great Tribulation poses an impossible, insolvable situation. Certainly it would be beyond the powers of Deity to resolve. For how could God rapture "all saints" to heaven and remove "all sinners" to hell and still negotiate His purpose? Of necessity He would have to abandon His plan to fulfil His unconditional promises to Israel; namely to make manifest His Son as the King of kings to reign for 1,000 years, to bless the nations, and to reconcile the heavens and the earth. This our God can never do. He is faithful that promised.

THE ELECT OF GOD

I have said enough on this subject. Let me turn quickly to the portion that shall occupy our interest now. I want to read Matthew 24:21-31: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. 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 then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

The word "elect" takes an important place in this part of the discourse. You observe it in verses 22, 24, and 31. As elsewhere in Scripture there is no tautology here. God never repeats Himself. He implies three distinctly different truths. At the first mention He notes the importance of the elect. The second mention brings out the immunity of the elect from the coming delusions, while the third mention shows the ingathering of the elect to their beloved homeland, Palestine.

It is imperative to draw your attention to the word *elect*. To understand it is to know of whom the Lord is speaking. One of two classes of people is before Him. As He speaks to the disciples He views them either as representatives of the members of the Church of God or as representatives of the future godly Jewish Remnant. If the former, then the Church must necessarily pass through the Great Tribulation: if the latter, then the Church must be raptured ahead of the Great Tribulation and the godly Remnant take its place in testimony.

You must not permit the word *elect* to stumble you. The Bible clearly establishes that it is employed of the holy angels, Old Testament as well as Church saints, and of course here where the saints in the Tribulation era are noted. The point you have to decide is whether these saints belong to the Church or Israel. Maybe your decision shall be made by the time we reach the conclusion of the message.

First of all let us consider the importance of the Elect.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ELECT

The importance of the Elect is without controversy. Because of them the Lord stays the execution of Judgment universally. Jesus says, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Obviously the extermination of all mankind is so certain that God suddenly intervenes to preserve a remnant. Judgment is really falling upon men. They have deliberately refused every overture of grace. And one notable characteristic of men in that day is their hostility to the saints, the elect ones. They are treated as the off-scouring of all things; fit only to suffer and die. Little do men realize that the Eternal God will use those despised ones to halt His judgments.

I seriously question if we properly appraise the value of the saints in the world at any given time in history. Speaking after the manner of men they are reckoned as "nobodies." In some respects they are looked upon as "misfits." They are so different from the unconverted mass around them. They are meek, harmless, humble, unaffected by the changing fashions of the age, separated from the world's politics, religions, pleasures and pursuits, and ever seeking to present a living Christ. They behave so unlike worldlings, whose interests and hopes are rooted in this world, for they declare that this world is not their home; they look for the Lord to return to take them to their home in heaven.

Then the Elect are a minority group. We are so few among so many. This eliminates, in the thinking and reasoning of men, all possibility of much value being attached to us. I am not now speaking about Church attenders or even Church members. Their name is "Legion." Have you ever moved among them or mixed with them, especially after a service is over? If you remember your Bible you must consider this the modern "mixed multitude." Probably 95 percent of all Church members in Christendom are unregenerate worldlings. That

crowd is not in my thoughts. I am referring only to born again ones. Beloved, they are few and far between.

But I am not surprised. True, genuine Christians have always been scarce in the world. There was Noah and his family in the midst of Antediluvian millions! Only eight were saved at the flood! Take an Abraham in an idolatrous world; he stands out alone. Think of an Elijah in his day; count the 7,000 that Jehovah said never bowed the knee to Baal, with him—not too many among the millions of earth. Jesus had 12 men around Him and one was a traitor. At Pentecost some 120 received the promised blessing. Where were the crowds that followed Him? Those few figures encourage us for they reveal the veracity of Christ's words: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

Despite the Elect's weakness numerically, and their apparent helplessness politically, they step into the gap and save the world from total destruction in Great Tribulation days. Never will so many owe so much to so few. But it has been so always: can you estimate the value of a Moses in Egypt, a Daniel in Babylon, a Paul in Asia Minor and Europe, a John Knox in Scotland, a Livingstone in Africa, a Hudson Taylor in China, a Carey in India, a Judson in Burma? Through their presence and ministry millions have been blessed.

That encourages me. I may not appear much in man's eyes but with God I am everything. More than that, I have everything men need for peace in this life and hope for the life to come. A great unspeakable dignity rests upon me. I magnify my office. At the same time a tremendous responsibility is mine. As the possessor of the Gospel I must proclaim it that others might share its wealth. I have the Light to impart to those in darkness. I have the Bread of Life to give

to the hungry. There is power in the Gospel to save men from their sins and to live acceptably for God. So, I must use every opportunity to be the greatest blessing to the largest number of people in the shortest time possible. My value must not be under-rated either to God or men.

IMMUNITY OF THE ELECT

Let us consider the second point—the immunity of the Elect. The Lord states positively that the false Christs and false prophets, with their diabolical powers, signs and lying wonders, shall not be able to decoy or deceive the Elect. I like the words “if it were possible.” The fact is, it is not possible! When the enemy rushes in like a flood, the Holy Spirit raises up the standard against him. I appreciate that many professors shall be deceived but they have nothing to withstand the deception. The godly Remnant are possessors of the Holy Spirit Who shall teach them the truths of God. And when mention is made that the Christ is in the desert, or in the secret chambers, they shall be unmoved. Well they know that the Messiah shall come like lightning from heaven (v. 27), and that in the meantime the ungodly part of the nation shall be consumed as a carcass by the eagles (v. 28).

Here is the secret why so many nominal Church-goers grasp the bait of Christian Science, so called Jehovah's Witnesses, I Am, and other devil-inspired cults. They have never been born again. They have no ear to hear the Shepherd's voice so they follow the voice of the hireling (see John 10). John pinpoints the reason in these words, “they went out from us, because they were not of us.”

It seems utterly incredible to me that any Christian, in this Church Age, would be deceived by the proclamation that Christ has come to earth already and is either out in the desert or in the secret chambers. That goes for the disciples right on to the destruction of Jerusalem. Everything they had been taught about their Lord was essentially different. They knew that He was at God's right hand making intercession for

them. They knew the time would come when He would return from Heaven to rapture them to the Father's house above. They knew they were going to accompany Christ when He came to earth to set up His Kingdom. Anything contrary was unheeded by them. And, may I say reverently, you can say the same about every child of God in the world today.

The Elect in the Tribulation Age are altogether different. They expect the Messiah to return to earth, to visit the desert where a Remnant shall be in the place prepared by God, and to come to His temple. But they know, too, that His coming shall be preceded by the "sign" in Heaven. That sign is the Shekinah Glory. It appeared at the Red Sea to provide Israel light and guidance. It accompanied the manna that came down from heaven. It abode upon the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in the land. This Shekinah Glory was taken from the earth because of Israel's sin, then returned with the incarnation of the Sinless Messiah. From Him it has never departed. The Tribulation saints shall look for it, and they shall not be disappointed.

At the close of His Olivet Discourse Jesus remarked that "the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." To the high priest at His trial, Jesus said, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." So without question the Lord's return to earth "immediately after the tribulation of those days" shall be something very conspicuous and auspicious.

INGATHERING OF THE ELECT

The third, and last point is the ingathering of the Elect. It is so simply stated. "And He (the Son of Man) shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (v. 31).

It must be crystal clear to you that the saints in the Tribu-

lation period shall busy themselves with the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. They shall be ambassadors for the King throughout the entire world. Now that Tribulation days are over, now that suffering is ended for them, now that the King has returned to Palestine to establish His world-wide Kingdom, there shall be a wholesale migration of those Elect ones to their land. There they shall behold the King in His beauty!

The return of the Elect is the theme of the prophets. Isaiah describes the home-coming in these words: "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall 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. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. 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. 11:11-16).

This is Israel's second coming to their homeland. And they are coming to leave it nevermore! The first return took place under Nehemiah and Ezra when the people rebuilt the city and temple. They remained in the land until A.D. 70 when Jehovah scattered them across the face of the earth for their rejection of His Son and messengers. The second return

takes place after their Messiah has appeared in glory. Then angelic ministry shall be employed to hasten the Elect exiles back home.

You will note four glorious facts to be accomplished then. Not one has been fulfilled thus far. First, the recovery shall be from all nations—from the four corners of the earth. As in the days of Moses when he was bringing Israel out of Egypt and “not a hoof was left behind” so shall it be in that day. Ezekiel predicts, “I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you again into your own land” (Ch. 36:24).

Second, attend to the reconciliation of Ephraim and Judah! The two houses of Israel, so long divided, are from henceforth to be one. All standing envyings and animosities shall be washed away by the blood of the Lamb. “Moreover, thou son of man,” saith another prophet, “take thee one stick, and write upon it, ‘For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions’: then take another stick, and write upon it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions’: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand . . . Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And 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 be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. . . .” (Ezek. 37:16-22).

Third, witness divine retribution on Israel’s enemies (v. 14). God has still a controversy with the Arab nations. The countries named here, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, may escape the fury of the Great Tribulation simply because of the Elect Remnant hiding there, but the sword of justice shall be sheathed in their side. Even the tongue of the Egyptian Sea shall be utterly destroyed. For the Gulf of Suez to be dried up would automatically empty the Suez Canal.

Fourth, behold the rejoicing of the Elect! With Israel back in the land under the benign sway of Messiah she breaks forth into song and sings: "O Lord, I will praise Thee . . . Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation" (Isa. 12).

DISTINCTIONS NOTED AT COMING

I must point out a few noteworthy distinctions between the Lord's return for the Church and His return to Israel.

1. When the Lord's return for the Church is in view, we read, "I will come again" (John 14:3) and "The Lord Himself shall descend . . ." (I Thess. 4:16). He comes alone. There is not even a mention of angels. However, when His return to Israel is mentioned, then He comes with all His holy angels (II Thess. 1:7) and all His glorified saints (I Thess. 3:13).

2. The Lord comes into the air, or atmospheric heavens, when He comes for His Church (I Thess. 4:17). This is the trysting place. His coming to Israel is different. Then "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem . . ." (Zech. 14:4). Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the world. Israel shall assemble here to crown Him King!

3. The Lord's return for the Church will remove the Holy Spirit from earth to Heaven (II Thess. 2:6-7). His work in forming the One Body shall be finished. But when the Lord appears to Israel it will occasion the "second coming" of the Holy Spirit. He shall come from heaven to earth to be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-29).

4. The Lord's return for the Church is to escort her to the Father's home on high (John 14:2-3). How different is His return to Israel! It is not to take her to Heaven but to put her in the place of universal supremacy over the nations (Isa. 2 and 4). He will also give to her the Land of Palestine,

from the Nile to the Euphrates, a 300,000 square mile inheritance.

5. The Lord's return for the Church shall be private. He shall raise His sleeping saints, quicken those saints who are alive and quickly rapture them to Himself. "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go . . ." (Acts 1:11). Only His own saw Him go: they alone shall see Him come. But His appearing to Israel is graphically described thus: "Every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7). He shall be seen by everybody, everywhere.

6. No signs are given the Church to indicate the imminency of the Lord's coming. All signs are connected with Israel. She is the divine barometer; God's time-piece. All dates belong to her.

7. The Lord's coming for the Church shall be before Daniel's seventieth week begins. His coming to Israel shall be after this period ends (Dan. 9:24-27). That is why the Church will not be in the world during any minute of the Great Tribulation.

8. The Lord's coming for the Church antedates the manifestation of the Antichrist (II Thess. 2:7) whereas His coming to Israel is to destroy the Antichrist in the burning lake and bring Israel full deliverance.

9. Seemingly the Lord summons the Church to Himself in the air (I Thess. 4:16-17) but employs angels to gather Israel from all the countries in the world to Palestine at His return to earth (Matt. 24:31).

10. You do not read of any great judgment taking place the moment the Lord returns for the Church, though the world shall be left to endure the seal, trumpet and vial judgments; but when He comes to Israel it is "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God" (II Thess. 1:7-10).

11. The Lord will return to glorify the Church, His Bride, and thus fit her to be united in holy matrimony with Him (Rev. 19:7-9). When He comes to Israel He shall make a

“new covenant” with her (Heb. 8:8-13). This covenant includes the revelation of God (v. 10); relationship with God (v. 10); recognition of God (v. 11); and remission from God (v. 12). In that day He shall resume relationship with Israel who is His divorced wife until now (Isa. 50).

Beloved, it is thrilling beyond compare to know Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and to understand, in some measure, God’s program for Him. His return, whether for the Church or to Israel, while it shall provide them with unspeakable pleasure, will provide Him with more. “He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.” Until He come let us devotedly live for Him and serve Him. He is altogether worthy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

THE PARABLE of the fig tree will be the theme of my message at this time. Let us read together the exact words spoken by Jesus our Lord as He continues His Olivet Discourse. He said, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:32-36).

At the onset of this message I must ask your indulgence while I make a digression. I confess that in my last message I purposely omitted two important Scriptures in the section dealt with so that I might have a little more time to deal with them now. I refer to verses 29 and 31. It might be well if I quote them so that you may be acquainted with them.

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

TERRIFYING PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

There is a time difference between these happenings. The changing physical conditions will take place "immediately after the tribulation;" the gathering together of the Elect will occur later. Indeed, it will inaugurate the Kingdom Glorious with the Israel of God back in Palestine.

These physical changes in the heavens shall be seen as a winding up End Time sign. They shall proclaim God's total displeasure in man. He has despised every overture of grace. Now the Day of the Lord has come with all its terrifying revelations. Joel, one of the earliest prophets to introduce the Day of the Lord, says that "the sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."

Ezekiel also mentions a like happening at this particular time when he says, "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land saith the Lord God" (Ch. 32:7-8). Then will you attend to the words of Isaiah: "Behold the Day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (Ch. 13:9-10).

The Seer of Patmos provides the most graphic and grim account of the Day of the Lord. He tells us, at the opening of the sixth seal by the Lamb of God, that "there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and

the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand' (Rev. 6:12-17).

The days after the Rapture of the Church to Heaven shall be fraught with terrifying fear for those left behind. What a moment when the heavens and the earth appear to be against sinful men! There shall be no place to hide; nowhere to go.

GATHERING TOGETHER

Immediately following the Great Tribulation, and these supernatural physical changes in the heavens, shall be the sign of the Son of Man in heaven coming "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30). Then comes the statement; "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (v. 31).

Post-Tribulation Rapturists make much of this verse. They insist upon its fulfilment at the Rapture of the Church. They harmonize the statements, "a great sound of a trumpet," and "gather together His elect" with the Thessalonian revelation which speaks of "the trump of God" and "we shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. 4:16-17). But this harmony does not exist between those two passages. To attempt to make them one and the same event is both untenable and unscriptural. Even the casual reader, let alone the student of the portions mentioned will note that the Thessalonian account says that "the Lord" sounds the trump of God whereas in Matthew's Gospel the sounding of the trumpet is by angels. There is a vast difference between the Lord and angels! It should also be remarked here that no angel, at any time or under any circumstance,

sounds the trump of God. That is reserved for the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, will you observe that the "gathering together" in Thessalonians is "in the air" but in Matthew the Elect are brought back to Palestine. The Thessalonian section speaks of the gathering of the Church; Matthew speaks of the gathering of Elect Israel. The Lord calls the Church to Himself; the angels bring back the Elect Remnant of grace to their homeland.

THE LAST TRUMP

I feel that the confusion I have just noted stems from a wrong interpretation of the trumpet. In my reading of the Post-Tribulation Rapturists' writings I have noted that they make the trumpet sounded by the angels in Matthew 24:31 to be the same as "the trump of God" in Thessalonians (I Thess. 4:16) and "the last trump" of Corinthians (I Cor. 15:52) and the "seventh trumpet" of Revelation (Ch. 11:15).

I differ sharply and strongly with this view. The context must decide the issues at stake. It will tell us when, for what purpose, and by whom the trumpet is sounded. For instance the Thessalonian and Corinthian passages herald the resurrection, reunion and rapture of the Church saints. The "seventh trumpet" in the Revelation is simply the last in that series just as the seventh seal and the seventh vial are the last in their respective series. When the "seventh trumpet" sounds it initiates the Great Tribulation and announces the outworking of the divine purpose from that moment until the end of time. Since the Lord sounds the trump of God, and an angel sounds the seventh trumpet, it is plainly stated that the trumpet sounded in the Olivet Discourse is by many angels.

There is a difference of opinion as to when the seventh trumpet is sounded. Mid-Tribulation Rapturists believe it is sounded in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27) and serves both to Rapture the Church to glory and to introduce the Great Tribulation. Post-Tribulation Rapturists, on the other hand, believe it is sounded at the close of Daniel's

seventieth week and will serve to Rapture the Church to meet the Lord in the air and immediately usher in the Kingdom Glorious.

While I dislike taking sides with any of those beliefs, for I am certain both are wrong, yet it is obvious to me that the seventh trumpet does not sound after the Great Tribulation. The entire context in Revelation 11 predicates that it introduces a time of unprecedented trouble.

To put these different trumpet soundings in their place chronologically, I would say that the trump of God sounds sometime before Daniel's seventieth week begins; the seventh trumpet will sound in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week; and the trumpet sounded by the angels will sound shortly after the seventieth week ends. The sounding of the trumpet by the angels appears to fit into the "Feast of Trumpets" (Lev. 23) which typifies the re-gathering of elect Israel to their own promised Palestinian homeland.

ISRAEL—THE NATION

Now to the subject proper. I want to draw attention to the golden link between the re-gathering of Israel at the beginning of Messiah's earthly Kingdom (v. 31) and the parable of the fig tree (vs. 32-36). In the former announcement we are face to face with Israel redeemed, re-gathered, re-united, and re-instated in the place of international leadership. It is the fulfilment of the many prophecies which detail Israel's future. Immediately follows the parable of the fig tree. Here Jesus speaks of the beginning of National Israel as an End Time sign. And a National Israel is an absolute necessity to pave the way for the development of God's purpose for her. The fig tree sign sets the stage for the enactment of the divine drama. On to this stage shall come the long-propheesied Antichrist who shall be Israel's king. He shall lead her into the vortex of sorrow, even the Great Tribulation, but she shall be saved out of it (Jer. 30:7).

That the Jews should become a nation for the purpose of fulfilling prophecy is strongly opposed by the A-Millennialists. This group does not believe that Israel shall be restored to the divine favor and live under the benign sway of the Messiah for one thousand years. Instead, they say that Israel is set aside forever. She will never have another chance, that is, as a nation. But, to avoid a conflict with God about His purpose for Israel in the coming day, and to save face in fundamental circles, they spiritualize the promises and prophesies and say they are being fulfilled in the Church today.

One writer very vehemently declares, "The Jewish nation shall never again be God's people, that is, as a nation."

Another writes, "There is not one word in the New Testament that teaches the Jews are to be gathered back to Palestine and that it is to be the national home of the Jews because God has pledged Himself that it shall be so. . . ."

I have another clipping here from the pen of one of their spokesmen. It says, "It may be that in years to come the Jews will possess a larger part, or even all, of Palestine. We do not know. But if they do they will secure it as other nations secure property, through negotiation, or purchase, or conquest, not by virtue of any as yet unfulfilled prophecies or promises."

Well, despite all they say to the contrary, Israel is at long last a nation in Palestine. I wonder if the A-Millennialists feel that it is merely coincidental for the Jews to become a nation now! To see such a happening in these last days should make them sit up and take inventory. Beloved, "This is the Lord's doings, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

ISRAEL—THE VINE

I think for us to understand the parable of the fig tree it is enlightening to know that Israel is presented in the Bible in three figures of speech; the vine, the olive tree, and the fig tree. They are all different figures and bring out God's appraisal of His people.

First, there is the vine. Isaiah declares, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching His vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill" (Ch. 5:1). I like the Psalmist's comprehensive description of Israel, the vine. He says, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; Thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparest room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river" (Psa. 80:8-11). Then, our Lord took up the parable of "a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country" (Matt. 21:33-46).

Israel the vine predicates her as a fruitful, joyful nation. The vine gives the grapes from which we get the wine that makes glad the heart of man. But this nation had every reason to be happy. She was God's exclusive nation. He dealt with her in ways unknown by any other nation. To her He revealed Himself and His program both for herself and the nations at large, and actually dwelt in her midst. What favors were hers! It is not to be wondered at when Moses exclaims, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of Thy help, and the sword of Thy excellency" (Deut. 33:29).

ISRAEL—THE OLIVE TREE

Second, there is the olive tree. We travel to the Roman Epistle to find this figure (Ch. 11). From the olive tree we get the olives which produce the oil, a constant type of the Holy Spirit of God. At once we conclude that here Israel is portrayed as God's Spiritual Nation.

Israel has assuredly answered to this truth. She is looked upon as being the mother of everything divine. Without question she is the mother of the law, for, "the law was given

by Moses." Then she is the mother of the Bible, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). Paul in Romans 9 with John in Revelation 12 definitely assert that she is the mother of our Lord, according to the flesh. He is "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). I believe, too, that she will yet be the mother of universal peace and prosperity when the "Man-child, who shall rule all nations with a rod of iron," comes back to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

It is but right for me to say that Israel, according to the flesh, was cut off the good olive tree because of her unbelief. In this Age of Grace the Gentiles, the wild olive branches, are grafted into the olive tree. This means that they are now in the divine favor though believing Jews share this favor or blessing. However, the purpose of God reveals that the Gentiles shall display the same unbelief that cut off Israel so they, too, shall share her judgment. Then comes the Redeemer, out of Zion, to bring salvation to "all Israel" who shall be grafted back into her own olive tree (read Rom. 11).

I must mention the unbelief prevalent in Gentile circles today. It is literally appalling. There is now no question about the threatened judgment falling upon Christendom. We have forfeited every right to the divine favor by denying every precious fundamental truth. William R. Newell, in his exposition of the Roman Epistle, makes this pertinent remark which I have before me. He declares, "That God is withdrawing from 'denominational' Christianity is very evident. 'Modernists' control some denominations completely and the hideous unbelief of 'modernism' is infiltrating slowly every denomination. Honest souls familiar with the facts all know this and are perplexed what to do." So, let us not be high-minded, but fear.

ISRAEL—THE FIG TREE

Third, there is the fig tree. Jeremiah comes to our assistance in understanding the meaning of this figure. He refers to

individual Jews as figs. This, at once, identifies the tree as a figure of National Israel (Ch. 24). Joel, too, has Jehovah saying that the Assyrian hath "barked My fig tree" (Ch. 1:7). Even the Lord employed the fig tree to set forth Israel in Matthew 21; while in the Olivet Discourse, according to Luke's account, He spoke of her as the fig tree and the Gentile nations as "all the trees." It is no mere conjecture, therefore, to see the fig tree as representing Israel as an independent nation.

Now will you take a closer look at this prophecy so that you might have a clearer idea as to what the Lord had in mind. I will detail it in four points.

In the first place, I want you to see that the Lord has before Him the establishment of the Jews as a nation. That is the implicate of the fig tree. When it took place it would be a real sign of His Second Advent. But have you ever considered what this prediction entailed? Surely He knew that Israel had lost the crown of nationhood some six hundred years before! And did He not, in this Olivet Discourse, predict the scattering of the people to the ends of the earth? Why then speak about them becoming a nation again? Simply because He knew it would happen!

And it has happened in our day and generation. We have actually witnessed above one million Jews return to their own land and become a nation. This is probably the greatest migration of any one people in the history of time. Two world wars helped expedite their migration and nationalization. In large measure we can say that World War I released Palestine for the Jews while World War II released the Jews for Palestine. The new Jewish State was born in May, 1948. Thus the dream of Jewry was realized, the prediction of Jesus was fulfilled. After some 2,500 years the crown of nationhood was made to adorn Israel's brow.

THE TENDER PLANT

In the second place, I must draw your attention to the fact that when Israel's branch is tender the Messiah will return. I do not feel that the Lord was speaking of Himself as the "Branch of Jehovah," or even the "tender plant," although both are true of Him. Somehow I feel He is referring to Israel's youthfulness and tenderness. It will be her condition when He returns. It is another way of saying that when Israel is a very young nation her Messiah will come. Evidently there is a very short time limit between the birth of the nation and the return of Christ.

POLITICAL STRENGTH

In the third place, you will hear the Lord say that when Israel's political strength is in evidence He will come again. That, to me, is the meaning of the fig tree "putting forth leaves." Leaves on a tree indicate its strength or weakness. And this raises the question, "How strong is Israel?" The answer is in her achievements politically since 1948.

I well remember that on the eve of Israel's birth the Arab world rose up in revolt against her. Israel's fate was seemingly sealed. It could not, humanly speaking, resist such overwhelming forces equipped with modern armaments. But, despite these terrific odds, the newly-born nation withstood all attacks, then gradually threw back the invaders. Israel's strength appeared supernatural. The Arabs went down in ignominious defeat. I need not remind you that they have not dared to fight Israel since!

A few years later came the Israel-Egyptian war on the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza strip. Egypt's threat to Israel's independence precipitated an attack by Israel to safeguard her interests and land. It was a one-sided affair. Almost overnight the Egyptians were routed completely and all their equipment captured. Had it not been for America's interven-

tion it is doubtful if Egypt would have survived. Once more the flag of victory was hoisted over Israel's land.

It is a well-known fact that the United Nations Organization voted to internationalize Jerusalem. Israel bitterly opposed the order. Immediately they transferred their capitol from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem. Commissions were sent by order of the U.N.O. to investigate the possibility of carrying out the plan but on every occasion they returned to dissuade otherwise. The plan has backfired. Jerusalem is still Israel's capitol in defiance of the U.N.O. and will remain so until the end of time.

Shortly after Egypt's defeat Russia sent an ultimatum to Israel. It was to the effect that if she committed another act of aggression Russia would feel it her responsibility to exterminate her. I wonder how arrogant and ignorant a nation can be? It would pay Russia's leaders to read God's prophetic Word, written by Ezekiel, about her future. She would there discover her future history. The prophet lays Russia open, both her heart and actions, and shows her evil intent when she invades Palestine in the latter years. He describes how she shall be met by GOD ALMIGHTY, the One Whom she defies and denies, and be brought down into the depths of humiliation. Five-sixths of her invading hordes shall perish and be buried in the valley of Hammon-gog. So, instead of Russia exterminating Israel it shall be the other way round. Whether Russia likes it or not Israel shall long outlive her.

THIS GENERATION

In the fourth place, I want you to look at the expression *this generation*. The Lord says, "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled." What really did He mean by this statement?

Let me read to you a few lines written by Dr. A. C. Gaebelin which I feel answer the question. In connection with the word 'generation' he says, "The wrong interpretation of the word 'generation' is responsible for the erroneous conception

so prevalent in our day. It is said that 'this generation' must mean the very generation, the people who lived then upon the earth, when the Lord spoke these words. It is easily seen how, if this is the meaning of 'this generation' the events predicted by our Lord must have been fulfilled within the lifetime of the people living then. What other event could be meant than the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70? Thus the wrong interpretation of these two words 'this generation' has led the large number of Bible teachers and readers of this discourse astray. But let us get the right meaning of 'generation' and all will be clear. The word *genea* means not necessarily the same persons living, but it also has the meaning of race. The English word 'generation' has this meaning of family or a race of a certain class of people. And so has the Greek. It is used in that sense in Luke 16:8. 'This generation' is the race sprung from Abraham, God's chosen earthly people. Well have they been called 'the everlasting nation'; better still we could call them 'the nation of destiny.' God has kept this race, and is keeping them for the fulfilment of His own great, revealed purpose. The verse, however, has also the meaning that the people living, when the end of the Jewish Age sets in, will behold its termination, it will be accomplished in a small space of time."

That is my belief. I sense that the generation alive in 1948 will be privileged to witness the actual fulfilment of the prophecies of the End Time and welcome back the King. As situations and moral conditions are at this present moment, there is the strongest probability of the Rapture, the outpouring of the Apocalyptic judgments, and the return of Jesus Christ to establish His world-wide administration in our day. Beloved, we can almost hear His footfall on the threshold of the door. It certainly becomes everybody to be ready. I trust you are ready through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some theologians have done their utmost to explain away the Second Advent of Christ. They have told us that it was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, or that it

happened when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, or that it happens at death, or that it will happen at the end of the material universe. They rule out all possibility of a Personal return of the Man Christ Jesus. To all such the Lord speaks, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (v. 35). He is coming again. All His prophetic utterances shall be literally fulfilled. These words level the critics. At the same time they elevate the faith of the child of God. He knows and believes his Lord, and waits patiently for the realization of all His words.

A final word of caution is given. It is to all those who incline to set the date of the Lord's coming. He says, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, but My Father only" (v. 36). So date-setting is positively forbidden. That is sufficient for the person who wishes to please God. To run counter to this command is to reveal lawlessness. The Lord would have His people control their minds and mouths!

Jesus is coming again. The task before us of reaching the unreached is tremendous but not impossible. With the strength of the Holy Spirit, and looking eagerly for the Lord's return, we go forward to win some for Christ. May we be "stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

CHAPTER NINE

THE DAYS OF NOAH

WE COME NOW to the final words of the Messiah in the Jewish section of the Olivet Discourse. He has just told His disciples that the fig tree will re-appear in the world at the Time of the End. It was His way of telling them that the Jews would again experience nationhood. Then, without a break in the sequence of thought, He speaks of the days of Noah as a parallel with the days when the Son of Man will come.

But let us read the exact words employed by the Lord. He says, "But as the days of Noah 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 Noah 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. 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. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:37-44).

SIGNS FOR THE REMNANT

These are intriguing words. They provide a profoundly significant sign which ties in with all that has gone before. Already the Lord has supplied His own with many signs which would denote the imminence of His Second Advent. Obvious-

ly the signs were not meant for the disciples present with Him, for they have long since departed this life. Then, they were not given for the Church, for she is not concerned with "times and seasons." They were given for the godly Remnant of the latter days, days subsequent to the Rapture of the Church, who will understand their prophetic significance.

The signs given here are quickly discerned. For instance, there shall be the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom on a world-wide scale; the Antichrist shall enter the Jerusalem temple and claim the honors of deity and thus fulfil Daniel's prophecy which appraises the act as "the abomination of desolation"; the Great Tribulation with its threat of extermination to the human race; the physical changes in the heavens above; and the presence of the Shekinah Glory, the visible token of Jehovah's presence.

The Lord also makes clear that the godly Remnant shall live in a time when Israel shall be reckoned as one of the nations of the world. Then they shall observe history repeat itself. The characteristics of Noah's day will be clearly seen in their generation. This sign predicates a moment of world-wide lawlessness—men and nations totally out of control. Civilization, as we have come to know it, is over the precipice; gross darkness covers the face of the people.

I cannot but see a ray of hope in all this for the Church of God. It simply means that no matter how wicked men may be in our day, they shall not acquire the full stature of wickedness until the Rapture of the Church takes place. Meantime, the restraint of the Holy Spirit is upon them. They are allowed to go so far but no farther. The presence of the Church among men is like the salt which preserves from corruption and the light which holds back the midnight darkness.

In our day we are being introduced to the days of Noah. But I must not anticipate my message. I feel we should turn back in our Bible from Matthew 24 to Genesis 6 so that I may pinpoint some of the outstanding characteristics of Noah's

day and place them alongside present day conditions to ascertain whether there is any correspondence between them. Should there be a distinct similarity, then we may reasonably conclude that we are moving swiftly towards the End of the Age. At least five facts face us.

INCREASE IN POPULATION

First in the realm of facts is an increase in population. This truth meets us in the opening statement which introduces antediluvian times. It definitely states that at that time "men began to multiply on the face of the earth." But I am not surprised at this revelation. It could not have been otherwise. The record has it in black and white that the entire race was committed to a program of lust and licentiousness. Divorce and re-marriage were the order of the day; that meant a phenomenal birth rate.

This feature requires no emphasis today. We have coined a phrase which is self-explanation—the phrase, "explosive population." Expert statisticians estimate that 120,000 persons are born daily into our world, that the world population in 1980 will approximate four billion and by the end of the century will reach the six billion mark. The prospect of such a phenomenal growth in population has all thinking men worried. It poses some insurmountable problems. There is, for instance, the problem of space and then the greater problem of supplies to meet the need. Probably the greatest problem of all is the fact that more than one half of the world's population by the year 2000 will be Asiatics. It presents a real threat to the West.

What lies back of this sudden, twentieth century upsurge in the birth-rate? I know that infant mortality is the lowest in known history right now. I know, too, that longevity is being enjoyed by millions. These things make for more people in the world and are highly praiseworthy.

I want to quote you from an interesting article that appeared in the November 23, 1959, issue of *Life* magazine

under the caption "Birth Control" written by Robert Coughlan, *Life* staff writer. He says, "For thousands of years it was the lucky child that survived. As late as a hundred years ago parents everywhere could expect to lose almost half their children before maturity. The biblical span of life, "three score and ten," actually was less than half that, and old people were venerated partly because they were so rare. Slowly men's numbers grew, profiting from each major advance in knowledge—the development of agriculture, commerce, power, machines—until finally toward the middle of the last century, there were a billion people on earth.

"Then scientific medicine began producing its miracles. Pasteur, Jenner and the other great 19th century medical pioneers launched the conquest of infectious diseases. Infant mortality started down, longevity started up. Whereas it had taken the first 5000 years of civilization to raise Man's numbers to a billion, it took less than 100 years to double this to two billion, the mark reached in the 1920's. To double this once again to the four billions expected by 1980 will have taken less than 60 years. And if the present rate of increase (1.6 percent a year) is maintained, the figure will begin doubling every 40 years, billions piling on billions in an explosive chain reaction of human fertility."

There is another side to this phenomenal world population growth. It belongs to the baser side of life, one not too pleasant or elevating to consider. However, you must know that promiscuous intercourse is practiced on the largest scale ever with the terrifying result that the number of illegitimates is at an all time high. Then you are aware that the marriageable age has been lowered from the twenties to the late teen ages. The belief persists that by 1970 most high school girls will marry before they finish their education. It all adds up to a higher birth-rate.

I think we are all too apt to forget that this 20th century has experienced two global wars. These wars left not only millions of dead but a demoralizing effect upon millions more.

Our young men and women in their adolescent formative years were thrust into a world loaded with temptations for which they were ill-prepared. Before they knew what had happened they were engulfed in sex sins. The innocents were led like sheep to the slaughter.

The children born in the 1914-1918 conflict were regimented for the second global war. They fared no better than their parents. Everything was put at their disposal to encourage illicit intercourse so that lust and licentiousness went on a rampage.

At this present hour, we have the children born in the 1939-1945 war in our high schools, colleges and universities. Hundreds of thousands of those teen-agers live in broken homes. Their own parents have been divorced or separated and re-married which makes home conditions anything but conducive to morality and discipline.

Coupled with these things the Supreme Court of the United States of America has passed a law which forbids the reading of the Bible in our schools. It is considered unconstitutional. I understand that there are some States which prohibit public speakers in the schools from mentioning the Name of God. They assert that it offends certain people. However, in those schools Communism's atheistic philosophy of "self-expression" is avidly taught. Thus the men and women of tomorrow are deprived of Bible knowledge which always restrains lawlessness and are fed Russia's godless propaganda and its free-love program which encourages sin in its varied forms.

The End Time "explosive population" sign is here to stay. I am absolutely certain that back of the sex-craze so prevalent among adults and juveniles is the release of multitudes of sex-demons from the heavenlies. They are chiefly responsible for the salacious literature on our bookstands, the suggestive television programs which excite the sex organs, the rock-and-roll dances backed by heathenish music, the present day educational system which invites our youths to investigate marital relationships, the free-love practiced by millions, and the

thousand-and-one things unmentionable here which attract the opposite sex to each other for illicit intercourse.

I trust that you Christian parents will seek to bring up your offspring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. May you treasure them like fine gold. As much as lies within your power, control what they watch on television, the children with whom they mix, and the literature they read. Make sure that they accompany you to Church to hear the simple Gospel of the grace of God. Do not permit them to come under the influence of a pastor who denies the Bible as the Word of God or who is tainted in any way with Modernism. Keep your children pure in spirit, and soul, and body.

INTERCOURSE WITH DEMONS

I have prepared you for the second fact observable in Noah's day. I refer to intercourse with demons. That there was an all out attack by demons on the human race in antediluvian times is incontrovertible. Their main purpose seemed to be the corruption of the race so as to make impossible the entrance into human life and history of the Christ of God. We read that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." The outcome of these marriages is given tersely thus: "There were giants in the earth in those days . . . the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

I am not unaware of the different beliefs held on the identity of the sons of God. Some theologians strongly assert that they were the sons of Seth in apostasy. Dr. C. I. Scofield holds this view. He contends that "the uniform Hebrew and Christian interpretation has been that verse 2 (Gen. 6:2) marks the breaking down of the separation between the godly line of Seth and the godless line of Cain, and so the failure of the testimony to Jehovah committed to the line of Seth (Gen. 4:26)." Other theologians as strongly assert that the sons of God were fallen angels. I incline to this view. How-

ever, regardless as to who is right, it is crystal clear that back of all the chaos in Noah's day were those vile, vicious demons.

I have in my hand a clipping taken from C. A. Coates' book on Genesis which deals with this particular line of truth. He says, "It is very solemn to see the significance of what we get here. What happened before the flood was a foreshadowing of that outbreak of spiritual wickedness which will give character to the apostasy of the last days. Men will get an unnatural, or perhaps one might say a supernatural, greatness in the days of the apostasy. The beast and the Antichrist will be indeed men of renown, heroes in man's eyes. But I believe the source of their mortality will be outside man; wicked spirits who have been in the heavenlies—fallen angels—will endow them with their wonderful powers. It is terrible to think of this combination between two distinct orders of fallen beings—an order superior to man joining with man in apostasy, and giving man powers that he would not have naturally. We know that even now there is a spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies; wicked spirits—real beings—who are the sources of influences opposed to God and to Christ, and against which saints are now called upon to wage a holy warfare. But in the coming day under supernatural influence men will be lifted up against God in a way the thought of which might well fill us with terror. And I think we can see the beginnings of this kind of thing even now. Men are already talking about the superman, and they are coming more and more under the power of supernatural beings. There is a great deal of evil commerce today with the unseen world. Superstitious religions are coming in from the East, such as theosophy, spiritualism, and so on. And the result will be that men will appear on earth who will be "men of renown" energized by Satan; they will be heroes in man's eyes, and the people will give themselves up to hero worship. It will be a state of things which will necessitate the intervention of God in judgment; it cannot be allowed to continue any

more than the antediluvian state of things could be suffered to continue."

It must be apparent that the Church of God is the target of amassed demon power at this moment. She staggers under the impact. Satan knows that his time is short and that the Church will soon be raptured beyond his reach. For him it is now or never. He has tried wide-spread persecution without success; now he tries the prostitution of divine truth. Think of the different cults that hurl their battering rams of damnable doctrines against her bulwarks! Consider Protestantism taken over by Satanic Modernism that persistently tried to undermine her foundations! Witness Roman Catholicism with her idolatrous, demon worship seeking to allure her into the wilderness of desolation! Behold the Oriental religious marshalling their forces against her especially in Africa and Asia! But the record stands: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her." So, let us put on the whole armor of God, withstand every attack of Satan, "and having done all, to stand."

The violence and corruption in antediluvian days and so apparent in our times stem from the same demon power. Delinquency is with us on every hand. In the early days of this century adults were the chief offenders, now it has switched to the teen-agers. They are responsible for most of the criminal acts. The governments of the world are licked if they had courage enough to admit it. The U.S.A. spends some twenty billion dollars annually on crime and correction taxes. Still crime persists on an ever-ascending scale. Penitentiaries are overcrowded with sex perverts, dope fiends, thieves, murderers, tax evaders, and criminals of every hue and dye. Walking our streets are hundreds of thousands of men and women, teen-agers and under, that should be serving time behind prison bars or should have paid the penalty in death for their criminal offense. Practically every last person mentioned is demon possessed or strongly influenced by those wicked beings.

The idea of men of supernatural stature is with us as with Noah. We have travelled far from the horse and buggy days!

Progress in travel whether on land, sea, or air has exceeded our wildest imaginations. We reckon ourselves now in the "Space Age." All preparations for journeying in outer space are under way. We had our head-on start when the scientists split the atom and discovered the basic secret of the universe. Power beyond human computation is at our disposal. We stand on the threshold of the greatest discoveries ever as we begin the exploration of the starry firmament. But man is no nearer God; the demons will take him farther away from Him.

Surely we are face to face with the Rapture! It is understandable that the removal of the Church to Heaven will give Satan and his satellites the right of way to introduce the supermen of the Great Tribulation Age. They shall appear with his power and authority to bring a Christ-rejecting generation under their sway. The consideration of the coming moment and all that it will hold for our unsaved loved ones left behind at the Rapture makes us quake. Shall we not, beloved, seek the salvation of those near and dear to us lest the catastrophe ahead envelop them forever?

INDIFFERENCE TO THE MESSAGE

The third outstanding feature in Noah's time was the people's stolid indifference to the message he proclaimed. Peter, the apostle, tells us that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." That is very suggestive indeed. It means that he condemned the antediluvians for their flagrant, blatant sin and warned them of the impending judgment of God. They understood his message perfectly for it was given in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. But they heeded him not. They were engulfed in their vile practices that filled their hearts with pleasure. Then, too, Noah spoke about a flood of waters which would inundate them. This was fuel for laughter and outright cynicism for they had never seen rain! So, the net result of Noah's preaching was nil. His own household alone responded to the appeal and escaped the judgment.

I feel that some folks will dispute this End Time sign. They will contend that Church attendance is at an all time high in the United States; that mass meetings are recording many decisions for Christ; that radio and television networks carry Gospel programs into millions of homes every week; that missionary boards and Bible societies have representatives in all parts of the world; that the Bible itself and Gospel literature are distributed to peoples that speak about 1,000 different languages.

What they say is perfectly true and these reports are very heart-warming indeed. But there are other considerations. For instance, some countries like Great Britain and Western Europe are finding church attendance at an all-time low. The situation is desperate. Indifference marks the masses everywhere. Fewer people than ever before are definitely receiving Christ as Saviour and Lord. Those that have eyes to see below the surface in Christendom know that the End is upon us.

INTEREST IN THE REMNANT

My fourth point brings Noah into the picture as a foreshadowing of God's interest in the Remnant of the end-time. You cannot fail to see this man bearing witness to saving grace in the midst of a race of supermen thrilled with music and materialism and completely given over to violence and corruption. Of him we read that "he found grace in the eyes of the Lord." He was God's man in that dark and difficult age.

But darker and more difficult days are just ahead. The moment will soon arrive when Satan and his demon hordes will be expelled from the heavenlies and come down to earth. Pandemonium will then begin. Wicked men will be raised up by Satan to negotiate his program which will include the absolute domination of the world. Billions of men shall rally to their cause. All opposition will be dealt with immediately and by death. Faith in God will be at its highest premium. To dare mention His Name and stand for His Christ will invite the executioner's axe.

At such a time as that God will raise up *His* Noahs. They shall fearlessly proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to creatures everywhere. They shall faithfully present Jesus Christ as the Divine Ark of Salvation into which men may flee in view of the impending wrath of God. Despite all opposition to them and their message, the response shall be terrific. The innumerable host of Gentiles, washed in the Blood of the Lamb and waving palms of victory as they enter the earthly Kingdom under the Messiah's glad sway, shall be part-recompense for their efforts (see Rev. 7). God puts His stamp of approval upon the sacrificial service of the godly Remnant. More than that, when the Messiah appears for their deliverance, they will witness their enemies as they perish in the flood of divine wrath.

INEVITABLE JUSTICE OF GOD

I know you will appreciate that the fifth outstanding fact in Noah's day was the inevitable justice of God. That comes to light in the destruction of the sinners and the salvation of the saints.

Sometime ago I jotted down some notes from Arthur W. Pink's book on "Gleanings in Genesis" which deal clearly and concisely with the Divine light the antediluvians had, which rendered them without excuse. He says that they had the "testimony of conscience, and the light of Divine revelation." Then he speaks of the promise of a Redeemer, the expiatory sacrifices, the mark set upon Cain to remind them of Divine retribution, the institution of the Sabbath as a set time for worship, the longevity of Methuselah, the preaching and the translation of Enoch, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit through Noah.

He makes this pertinent remark, "A Divine revelation had been despised and rejected. Repeated warnings had been flouted. Atonement for sin by an expiatory sacrifice had been spurned. Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. The number of God's saints had been di-

minated to such an extent that there was but one family left who feared the Lord and walked by faith. There was not sufficient "salt" left to preserve the carcass. God had forewarned the race that His Spirit would not always strive with man, and now His longsuffering was ended; therefore, His spirit would be withdrawn, and naught then remained but summary judgment. Though the faithful Remnant should be sheltered, yet the storm of Divine wrath must now burst upon a world filled with iniquity."

Jesus our Lord tells us that the evil men continued their iniquity until the very day "that Noah entered the ark, and took them all away." Then He adds these significant words: "So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two be in the field, 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."

It does not take much spiritual acumen to note that Divine justice dealt with the one taken in judgment, and the one left passed on into the blessing and favor of a newly purged earth, in Noah's times. An exact correspondence with this shall be in evidence at the coming of the Son of Man. The one taken shall perish, the one left shall enter the millennial Kingdom.

You must never connect this revelation of the Second Advent of the Son of Man with the Rapture. If you do, confusion will abound. As I have mentioned in a previous message the Rapture is not seen, nor even hinted at, in the Olivet Discourse. It was still a secret in the mind of God and would not be divulged until the Upper Room Discourse (John 14:1-3), and then fully expounded in the Church Epistles.

The Olivet Discourse treats the Second Advent of Christ in precisely the same way as that advanced in the parable of the tares and wheat. In that parable the tares are first gathered in bundles and then consigned to the furnace of fire while the wheat is brought into the earthly garner or the Kingdom on earth (Matt. 13). The one is taken for judgment; the other is left for blessing.

Now, the order is in reverse at the Rapture. Then the dead in Christ shall be resurrected, the living saints changed and together caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and the ones that are left are reserved for judgment. In other words, at the Rapture the one taken is raptured to heaven; the one left is reserved for the Tribulation era with its terrible judgments.

We should be deeply exercised in these days about the salvation of our unsaved, lost, loved ones. There is the utmost probability that Jesus will come soon and the saints be removed to heaven. This will mean everlasting damnation to those left behind that have refused our Lord and theirs. Remember the Rapture will seal the destiny of millions for either heaven or hell.

Our concluding section of this Discourse has a timely warning and admonition clothed in dramatic, soul-stirring language. Jesus says, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

The Lord's concern for His own is still in view. He would not have them lapse into a state of carelessness and be taken unawares when He appears to set up His Kingdom. To many in Israel He will come as a thief and that which they prize most highly shall be taken from them. They will lose their lives in judgment and lose a place in Messiah's Kingdom. All such will never have experienced the new birth. They are but mere professors. No such thing could ever happen to the true believers. At this particular moment of which the Lord speaks they will have passed through the Great Tribulation, they will be gazing upon the final signs which indicate His Advent. Their hopes shall be brought to concert pitch. They shall be ardently watching and waiting and working for Him. Then suddenly He shall be manifested in all His glory to escort them into the Kingdom Glorious. Precious moment for them!

In your perusal of the Church Epistles you will search in vain for any mention of Christ coming as a thief for His Church. It is absolutely foreign to the different relationships He has with His Church. That this truth may be abundantly clear to you I will briefly refer to some Scriptures which have the Rapture in view and show you exactly what I mean.

First, He will come as the Savior. This is foundational and predicates that we shall receive the final installment of salvation then. The first installment was ours at conversion's day; the second is ours along life's way; the third will be ours when our bodies are changed. I often say that salvation covers the three parts of our personality, spirit and soul and body, and that until we are glorified, salvation shall not be fully ours. "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body . . ." (Phil. 3:20-21).

Second, He will come as the Second Man out of Heaven (I Cor. 15:47-58). As such He shall raise the sleeping saints and change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, every living saint. They shall then be ready for the great translation to heaven.

Third, He will come as the Lord (I Thess. 4:16-18). Here we are told that all the saints shall be raptured to meet the Lord in the air. Although it is not the point of revelation in the Thessalonian Epistle it is more than probable that the Bema shall be set up immediately after the meeting in the air and for this reason Christ is seen as Lord here.

Fourth, He will come as the Son of God (John 14:1-3). After the meeting in the air we shall be taken directly to the Father's home on high. It is the home of the sons of God. That is the implication of those never to be forgotten words "In My Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you . . . I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Fifth, He will come as the Bridegroom (Eph. 5:25-27). The Church is the Bride of Christ. Sometime after her translation

to glory she is taken to the Eternal Throne for her union with the Heavenly Bridegroom (Rev. 19:7-9).

Sixth, He will come as the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16). In this relationship He will introduce us to God's eternal day, the day on which the shadow of an evening never falls. As the Millennium begins the Lord shall be seen as the Sun of Righteousness to drive away sin's darkness. Then shall follow the eternal state where righteousness shall dwell and where God, who is Light, shall be all in all.

Seventh, He will come as the Captain of our Salvation (Heb. 2:10). This suggests final, absolute victory over every foe: "And the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15:26). Satan and his satellites, sin and all sinners, and death, too, shall be consigned to the ever-burning Lake of Fire while a redeemed humanity will enjoy forever a redeemed universe.

If you attend carefully to the different relationships in which Christ will reveal Himself to the Church at the Rapture—as the Savior, the Second Man, the Lord, the Son of God, the Bridegroom, the Bright and Morning Star and the Captain of our Salvation—you will realize that He is not coming as a thief nor even as the Son of Man. Both have reference to His coming back to earth, and especially to Israel.

Having said these things I want to emphasize the fact that whether our Lord is speaking particularly about the Rapture or the Revelation He always insists upon His own watching for Him. He would ever have them in a state of spiritual readiness. He knows that His people who allow the hope within them to do its gracious work will be enabled to purify themselves, even as He is pure (I John 3:3). So, above everything else, let us be ready, let us be watching and waiting and working for Him when He appears.

CHAPTER TEN

CHRISTENDOM: THE WISE AND THE EVIL SERVANTS

THE SECOND PART of the Olivet Discourse which runs from Matthew 24:45 to chapter 25:30 will engage our attention now. It might be captioned as "The Christian Age," or "Christendom," or even better and more scripturally, "The Kingdom of the Heavens."

This particular theme has been developed in the previous part of the Gospel by Matthew where the seven parables of the "Mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens" give the internal and external conditions prevalent in Christendom (Ch. 13). Here, however, it is the moral side that is stressed. I suggest that since we are an integral part of Christendom we should give particular heed to the message in the three parables we are about to consider.

JEWISH AND CHRISTENDOM SECTIONS DIFFER

It does not necessitate great spiritual insight to note that there are differences between the Jewish section, which we have so recently considered, and the one before us now. The differences are not without their spiritual significance. I have no doubt that if we know the reason for the differences we shall be the better instructed in the ways of God with men. We shall see that God does distinguish between Israel and the Church as well as between the Church and Christendom.

You must have noticed that all the national and international signs given in this remarkable prophetic Discourse are in the Jewish part which occupies chapter 24:4-44. That is

because the disciples, who were with their Lord on the Mount, were representatives of the coming Jewish godly Remnant who shall be on the earth when the signs are in evidence. On the other hand, no signs are stated in the three parables which deal with Christendom, for the same disciples are now seen as representatives of Christians in the Church Age where national distinctions are not recognized. Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, are "all one in Christ Jesus," and for them no signs are required to indicate the imminency of Messiah's second advent. The Church Age is preeminently the Age of Grace, or the Age of Faith.

A closer look at this Discourse will disclose that in the Jewish section the Lord signally sets apart a people, and He limits the scene of operations to a particular place; whereas, in the second section, no such limitations are imposed. The Jews and Palestine are principally in mind in the first part, but Christians and the professing world are before Him in the second.

The Jewish section emphasizes the truth of the coming of the Son of Man; the Christendom section refers to His coming as the Lord, and as the Bridegroom. "The Son of Man" phrase is omitted altogether. If you question this statement in view of what we have in our Authorized Version in chapter 25:13 where it reads, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh," I must refer you to the earlier manuscripts which have not this verse as part of the Discourse.

THE CHURCH AND CHRISTENDOM

I mentioned a moment ago that there is a distinction in Scripture between the Church and Christendom. They are very often taken to mean the same thing, but they are far from it. You will become involved in your thinking unless you are able to distinguish between them.

The Church, beloved, is composed of all those born-again between the day of Pentecost and the Rapture who are to

meet the Lord in the air. This is something altogether distinct from Israel and forms no part of God's previous program for Israel. The Lord clearly stated to Peter at Caesarea Philippi, upon being confessed as "The Christ, the Son of the Living God," that "Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16-18). I have oftentimes drawn attention to the fact that Jesus did not say, "I have been building My Church"; as if He had been doing it in past times: nor did He say, "I am now building My Church"; as if He were engaged in that work then: but that He emphatically said, "I will build My Church," which meant a future operation.

It is evident from the fuller revelation about the Church given in the Pauline Epistles that it was necessary for Christ to be glorified and the Holy Spirit to come into the world ere the Church could be formed. It is the Holy Spirit's baptism of believers into the One Body which forms the Church. This took place on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2 and I Cor. 12:12-13). All believers were baptized then. They enter into the blessing upon receiving Christ in their own day and generation. The believers are taken from among Jews and Gentiles, and are no longer reckoned by their national distinctions. The Church of God is absolutely free from such distinctions for its members are One Body in the Lord (read Eph. 2:11-22). When the Lord descends from heaven with the triumphant shout, the entire Church will rise to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:16-18). Not one single member of His Body shall be left behind.

Christendom, on the other hand, is composed of all that profess the Name of Christ, whether real or unreal, wheat or tares. It includes the great mass of people that have come under the influence of Christianity. Jesus explains this truth in His parables on the "Mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens." Christendom will continue after the Rapture of the true Church and will be known as "Babylon the Great,

the Mother of Harlots." It shall come under the apocalyptic judgments of God prior to and at the manifestation of Christ.

THE FIRST PARABLE

The section before us consists of three parables, namely, the parable of the wise and evil servants; the parable of the ten virgins; and the parable of the talents which the Lord gave to the traders. You will note that each parable has the Lord's Second Advent as the governing object. This means the public appearing of Christ and not the Rapture of the Church.

I want to read to you the first parable. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Verily, I say unto you, that He shall make him ruler over all His goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, 'My Lord delayeth His coming'; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat, and drink with the drunken; 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" (Matt. 24:45-51).

This parable is both sublime and solemn. Three things emerge from it which are of real spiritual significance. First, there is the meaning of the household; second, the ministry for the household; and third, the moral responsibility of the servants to the household and to their Lord.

THE MEANING OF THE HOUSEHOLD

The household idea is suggestive of all those in the House of God by profession. They are seen as one family. Paul refers to them in these pungent words: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Him-

self being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

It cannot be gainsaid but that all the people referred to here by Paul were truly born again. He introduces his epistle to those Ephesians by speaking of them as saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. He then goes on to show that they have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, which simply means that they have been chosen, predestinated, accepted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, quickened, raised, seated, made nigh, given peace, and reconciled unto God, and they have had the privilege of access to God. Then, too, they had been taken by the Holy Spirit and brought into the heavenly household for the Divine pleasure. Christ Himself was their foundation and chief corner stone, and this signified absolute security to them. They were indeed the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eventually, they would share in all the glory of their adorable Lord.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

Every saint of God is part of the household of God. A great dignity rests upon him. Paul expresses this when he writes to Timothy, saying, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh; justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (II Tim. 3: 14-16).

There is a mistaken idea abroad that saints are in the House of God only when they are gathered together with fellow-believers. They look upon the building where they gather as the House of God. People will tell you that they

have been to the House of God today when they have attended a gathering for some religious purpose. But they are far removed from the truth of Scripture. The House of God is a figure of speech to describe all saints in the Church Age. Every saint is seen as a stone in that building, or, if you like the family figure better, a member of the family of God. Now it is quite impossible to get out of the family, or to wrench yourself free from the building. I take it that we are always in the House of God, whether at business, on the street, in the home, or in a building with other people. How important, then, that we behave ourselves as those in the heavenly aristocracy! Christ-like behavior becomes us at all times and under all circumstances. There should be a holy reverence always present with us. A God-conscious nearness will give us this attitude.

DIVINE DIGNITY

This fact becomes transparent when you realize that "the House of God, which is the Church of the Living God, is the pillar and ground of the truth." Then "the truth," referred to here, is revealed as "the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." It is almost unbelievable that "the truth" should be deposited in us, but God has made us its custodians. The treasure is in earthen vessels. Neither wonder divine dignity is ours!

I cannot escape from mentioning the Kohathites whose work is described in the Book of Numbers (Ch. 4) . Those men were responsible to bear the Ark of the Covenant upon their shoulders. It was a special type of Christ. Pure gold covered the shittim wood. This spoke eloquently of His absolute Deity so indissolubly linked with His Perfect Humanity. It prefigured Jesus who is "God manifest in the flesh." On the top of the Ark was the Mercy-Seat, a kind of cover, or lid, overshadowed by the Cherubim, part of the

Mercy-Seat, all beaten out of pure gold. The Mercy-Seat set forth Christ as the Divine Propitiatory, and the Cherubim proclaimed Him as the Righteous One, the executor of the purposes of God. Within the Ark were the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the two tables of the covenant. The manna unquestionably spoke of Christ the Prophet; Aaron's rod that budded as Christ the Great High Priest; and the two tables of the covenant as Christ the King, the One who shall rule over all created intelligences for the glory of God.

No words could ever over-estimate the dignity of the Kohathites who were entrusted with such a glorious work. And I cannot conceive of words being used by us to tell out the dignity that rests on us as the bearers of Christ to our brethren and fellow-men. We should magnify our office. To take Christ to perishing men and see them rescued from ultimate and eternal perdition is enough to fill our hearts with everlasting thankfulness. Then to minister Christ to the hearts of His own and thus give them cheer, encouragement, and strength is a great, unspeakable privilege. Let us never underestimate the work committed to our keeping.

PRIVILEGE AND PURGING

The letter to the Hebrews brings out two truths connected with the House of God. The one is that this House was built by God the Son (Ch. 3); and the other is that we have Jesus as our Great High Priest to lead us into the presence of God (Ch. 10:19-22). Each member of the household is privileged to draw near to God. He is a priest in his own right. He can pray and give praise to God at all times and under all circumstances. I trust we shall avail ourselves of this inestimable privilege. As we enter the Divine Presence nothing, and no one, should make us afraid, for Christ our Great High Priest, is waiting to welcome us. So let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace to present ourselves and every detail of our lives.

I must not evade the solemn side to our being the House of God. Peter tells us that "we are built up a spiritual house,

a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5); then proceeds to say that "judgment must begin at the house of God" (Ch. 4:17). In the first instance he presents our privilege as priests: in the next, our pruning or purging. It is God in His disciplinary dealings with us. He will not tolerate sin. We know that Peter saw this truth in full force in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts.5). Under his own direction both those people died for lying to God the Holy Spirit. Judgment certainly began at the House of God! The same demonstration was given in the Corinthian Church, for there, because some of the saints ate and drank of the Lord's Supper unworthily, they were made to suffer physical weakness and even death (I Cor. 11:30). It is a serious matter to impose upon the grace of God. He must be held in reverence by all that draw near to Him. "Holiness becometh Thy House, O Lord, for ever."

THE GREAT HOUSE

The probability exists that the Household in the parable embraces all professors of Christ. It seems to carry with it the idea of the entire Christian profession. This takes in the true and the false, the real and the unreal. The same basic thought is expressed in what Paul calls a great house. His actual words are: "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these," says Paul, "he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Tim. 2:20-21).

I think you will quickly perceive that, in this second letter to Timothy, the real and the unreal are together. Each of the four chapters, which make up the epistle, has two men named whose life and doctrine did not correspond to Him Whose Name they bore. Both Phygellus and Hermogenes deserted the cause of Christ (Ch. 1:15); Hymaneus and Philetus denied the resurrection to come, saying it was already past (Ch.

2:17-18); then Jannes and Jambres, who imitated the miracles wrought by Moses in the court of Pharaoh, are brought forward here to indicate that some professors were endeavoring to deceive the saints by the power of imitation (Ch. 3:8-9); and finally Demas is spoken of as loving this present world, and Alexander is cited as one that tried to harm Paul and hinder the Gospel of Christ (Ch. 4:10, 14).

All of the men mentioned were in the Great House. They were part of the Household. Their presence and ministry put the saints in jeopardy of being corrupted in their spiritual life. Instead of following their pernicious ways, they are exhorted, in the second chapter in particular, to separate themselves from all worldly entanglements (v. 4), striving about words to no profit (v. 14), profane and vain babblings (v. 16), false doctrines (v. 18), iniquity (v. 19), youthful lusts (v. 22), and foolish and unlearned questions (v. 23). To follow this exhortation would enable them to be clean, consecrated, and conditioned to do the Master's will and work (vs. 20-21). Thus would they make their "calling and election sure!"

HISTORY OF THE PROFESSING CHURCH

It would not give the full story of the Household if some reference were not made to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1-3). In this section of Scripture we have the history of the professing Church, or Christendom, from century one to the Lord's return. The first chapter shows the seven golden lampstands with the Son of Man in the midst. This is unquestionably the Divine viewpoint of the Church. She is His own workmanship for the revelation of Himself to this world. The two chapters that follow present more the human side, as seen by God, of the professing church as she marches down through the centuries towards the Second Advent of Christ. This is noted by failure and faithlessness. There is a strong resemblance between the Divine side of the Church in Revelation I and the first Epistle to Timothy where the House

of God is presented; and between Revelation 2 and 3 and II Timothy where the great House is the subject in hand.

The historic march of the Church from century one to its closing moments on earth is a sad, sordid story. It bespeaks declension from the first Church Ephesus until you have the threat of ejection by the Lord in Laodicea.

A closer look at the seven churches will show a prophetic foreview of the Church's history. For instance, we have in Ephesus the first-love Church of century one; in Smyrna the martyr Church of centuries two and three; in Pergamos the married Church of century four; in Thyatira the Papal Church of century six; in Sardis the reformation Church of century sixteen; in Philadelphia the Missionary Church of century nineteen; and in Laodicea the self-satisfied Church of century twenty.

THE ONE-WORLD CHURCH

The true Church shall be raptured to Heaven during the Laodicean period. It is no longer seen on earth throughout the Book of the Revelation after chapter 3. What else can be implied than its removal from earth to glory as chapter 4 opens, for it opens with the rapture of John from Patmos to heaven. It is from this viewpoint he sees the future progress of Christendom as it moves toward its ultimate end in Babylon.

Christendom moves swiftly now towards a one-world Church. All movements within the major denominations anticipate the unification of all faiths, whether Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic. The desire for Church unity is strong everywhere. It might well be that the unseen hindrance to bring about the one-world church is the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Restrainer, in the true Church. Once He withdraws His presence at the Rapture of the Church, the green light will be given apostate Christendom to realize its program.

There seems to be little doubt left now in the minds of all thinking people that the One-World Church's headquarters will be Rome—or, to be more emphatic, The Vatican. Protestant religious leaders know that Rome will never submit to anything short of full recognition of the Pope as the earthly head of the church. So all the roads in Protestantism lead to Rome. And this is fully borne out in Revelation 17.

This chapter reveals the "great whore," or "Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots," or apostate Christendom, the One-World Church. You will note how she sits upon the many waters which are interpreted by God as meaning "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (vs. 1 and 15). Roman Catholicism alone claims this right. Then, too, she sits upon the seven mountains, seen as seven heads, or more precisely, Rome, the city of the seven hills (vs. 3 and 9). Her ten horns are seen as ten kings which form the future revived Roman Empire according to Daniel and John (see vs. 3 and 12 with Dan. 7 and Rev. 13). The colors of her garments, purple and scarlet, are those of the Papacy (v. 4). Her wealth may be noted in the gold, precious stones, and pearls (v. 4). And she is wealthy beyond computation despite the poverty of most of her devotees! The outward resemblance of being in the place of testimony for God is recognized in the "golden cup in her hand" but it is "full of abominations of her filthiness," or her superstitions, idolatries, and immoralities (v. 4). And God makes this manifest when He writes across her forehead the name "Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother Of Harlots and Abominations Of The Earth" (v. 5). The martyrs in the Church and Tribulation Ages are carefully described, for since this woman's appearance in the world she has been an antagonist against all those who give wholehearted allegiance to Jesus our Lord (v. 6). Finally, God unveils her untimely end through the Empire she helped to evolve. The ten kings, under a supreme Dictator, will completely overthrow her (v. 16).

The prophetic Scriptures indicate that the overthrow of the One-World Church takes place in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. It is at this time the Antichrist sets forth his personal claims to absolute Deity and demands the worship of both apostate Christendom and Jewry (Rev. 13). The One-World Church will have paved the way, through its system of idolatry, for its devotees to worship one person and one image. This will be the final state in Christendom when Christ appears to begin His universal reign.

As this Age of Grace closes I expect increased pressure and persecution from the major Protestant denominations and Roman Catholicism against true saints of God. I also expect to see movements away from these denominations that are hastening quickly towards apostasy. It is blessed indeed to stand outside of all that is denying the rights of our glorious Lord and to be identified with those who truly worship Him in spirit and in truth.

MINISTRY FOR THE HOUSEHOLD

Now let us glance at the ministry for the Household. The Lord puts the ministry into the hands of His gifted servants. They are seen here in the place of Divine authority and responsible to minister to the needs of the Household.

Divine authority is invested in the minister of the Word. The Lord makes him the "ruler over His Household." But this is not for self-assertion or to further personal interests. Such a thought is foreign to Him, the Meek and Lowly One. He detests, and strongly condemns, the spirit of a Diotrophes. To love the preeminence or to refuse real saints fellowship with the people of God is positively evil.

The authority is connected with the administration of the ministry. It has nothing to do with lording it over God's heritage, but means that the servant must speak with the authority of his Lord. There must be no fear entertained or favor shown to anyone when he ministers the Word. Fearlessness and faithfulness should characterize him. One servant

of God told me with tears in his eyes how he had failed his Lord in the ministry. He would prepare his message prayerfully and carefully, then, when he took his place in the pulpit he would see some of his well-to-do members, whom he knew would not approve of what he was about to say, and he would not say it. He confessed that he lacked authority because he refused to exercise it.

Paul was no man-pleaser. He realized that his ministry came directly from heaven and carried with it all the authority of God. Why then fear men? Why tone down the message to suit their whims and fancies? That would rob him and the Word of authority and blessing. It mattered not to him whether he invoked human displeasure and incurred the wrath of man. He was prepared to suffer and die for the testimony. Even more hurtful to him than the ungodly world's attitude, was his own brethren's attitude toward his ministry. They tasted other ministry from Judaizers which suited their appetites better and so they looked upon Paul with suspicion and upon his ministry with contempt.

NOT EVANGELISM BUT MINISTRY

It should be made quite clear that the Lord is not dealing with the evangelist so much as the pastor and teacher in the parable. The ministry is not to the world but to the Household. There is another parable in this series which takes up the evangelist and evangelism and the Lord will deal then with their implications. But first things are first with the Lord. The need of the Household ranks highest in His estimation, for they are His own blood-bought ones. He is the Shepherd, they are His sheep, so He is responsible to give them refreshment by the green pastures, rest by the still waters, restoration by confession, righteousness by the power of His Name, refuge by His presence, rejoicing by communion with Him and the anointing of His Spirit, and reward by His wonderful grace (see Psa. 23). The minister of the Word brings the saints these matchless blessings.

The ministry for the Household, with its ultimate objective, is stated clearly in Ephesians. The text reads: "Unto every one of us is given gifts according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And He gave some Apostles; and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:7-13).

To summarize the gifts it may be said that the Apostles and Prophets laid the foundation in their inspired writings for the Household; the Evangelist works in harmony with other members of the Body of Christ to win the lost for Christ; the Pastor nourishes and cherishes the saints, while the Teacher teaches them the things of God. When all operate in harmony, Christ morally is formed in our lives and the work of God is effectively and efficiently accomplished. Each gift carries Divine authority for its exercise.

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTER

The last point I wish to deal with is the moral responsibility of the minister to the Household. He is a very responsible person. His responsibility mainly lies in providing "meat in due season" to each member of the heavenly Household. Such a charge properly understood will predicate a total surrender of the servant to his Lord. He will never entertain his own will but rather seek to know the will of Him who sent him.

In the family of God there are three classes of Christians. John says they are comparable to babes, young men, and fathers. The babes are the young in faith and beginning their Christian journey; the young men have been tested by the world and its god, Satan, and have stood firm for the Lord; the fathers are the mature Christians who have come to know

God the Father in a very deep, thorough manner and whose entire life is Christ-centered (I John 2:12-29). These are together and each class has to be so ministered to that benefit and blessing shall be given all. The babes need the milk of the Word, or the simple, elementary truths explained; the young men are able to digest stronger food to help them retain and increase strength; the fathers crave for the strong meat, or the deep things of the Word.

You will appreciate that the minister who means to meet the needs of the Household must give himself to the study of the Scriptures and a wholehearted devotion to his Lord. He will always come fresh from the Divine Presence and bring out of the Divine treasure-house things both new and old. To build up the saints in their most holy faith will necessitate a great variety in the messages. A lazy servant will fail both the Lord and His people. Solomon describes the kind of person that does his work well. He says, "Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The minister sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even, words of truth" (Eccl. 12:9-10).

MEAT IN DUE SEASON

Paul was truly disciplined in the ministry. He knew how to give "meat in due season." Every epistle he wrote majored on some truth. For instance, his Epistle to the Romans had justification as its main theme; the Corinthian Epistle stressed the need of sanctification; Galatian saints were taught the truth of liberation in Christ as against the bondage of the Law; the Ephesians were given real insight to their exaltation in the heavenlies in Christ; to the Philippians he taught more their transformation into the likeness of Christ; Colossian believers had their expectation of Christ's return set clearly before them; while the Thessalonian saints were instructed about

their glorification when the Lord descends into the air to receive them unto Himself.

The letter to the Hebrews is another concrete example of providing ministry suited to meet the needs of Christians. Those Hebrews were trained in the law with its temple, its altars, its sacrifices, and its priesthood, yet they had professed faith in Christ. There was always the strong temptation to return to Judaism, so the writer makes it crystal clear that everything appertaining to the Old Covenant had found perfect expression and fulfillment in Jesus the Lord. They had everything in Him, they did not need to return to the beggarly elements of the Law. The epistle left them to indulge in Christ to their heart's content. This is true, God-glorifying ministry, or "meat in due season."

RAPTURE AND REVELATION

One thing the Lord strongly presents in these parables is His Second Advent. He speaks most commendably about the servant who is evidently both watching and waiting for His return and yet He speaks so censoriously about the one who says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming." This heart-attitude towards Him is both critical and cold. The net result is that he mistreats his fellow-believers and acts lawlessly. For him there is nothing but judgment.

I take it that the two servants represent the true and the false ministers of the Word. The Lord's return brings them out into the open. The wise servant receives rulership over his Lord's goods while the other is apportioned eternal loss.

The parable looks beyond the Rapture to the Revelation of Christ. The Rapture introduces the saints to the Bema where the rewards are presented. All ministry will be tried in the fire of Divine holiness there. That which has the character of gold, silver, and precious stones shall be acknowledged in a permanent reward but that which is likened unto wood, hay, and stubble shall be completely consumed though the

minister will be saved, so as by fire. There is no place given the evil servant. He is not there. If he were there, then it would entail his glorification and rapture with his final expulsion to Hell. Such a thought is unthinkable and unscriptural. At the Revelation of Christ, however, which this portion anticipates, the wise servant enters the kingdom with divine honor but the evil servant is "apportioned his place with the hypocrites."

It becomes every Child of God, especially the minister of the Word, to keep the Lord's return ever in mind. He must not permit anything or anyone to interfere with the blessed hope that at any moment he may be called home to be with his Lord. The moment he begins to lose the vision of the imminent return of Christ he is in grave peril. Worldliness and carnality will soon put in their claim and ere long he will be like those "without hope, in the world." To expect Christ today will help us to maintain personal purity and impart a strong desire to reach our unfortunate fellows with the Gospel. So, let us be like men who wait daily for their Lord to come.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHRISTENDOM: THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

OUR INTEREST in the Olivet Discourse increases considerably when we reach the parable of the ten virgins. This is occasioned by the fact that we are on controversial ground. I am sure we are keenly aware that the theologians have used this parable as an arena where they have fought to maintain their own particular belief as to its meaning.

Some theologians assert that the parable strongly supports the Arminian doctrine. This doctrine, as you may know, advocates that it is possible for a believer in Christ to lose his salvation through his continuance in sin. They aver the parable teaches that the five foolish virgins forfeited salvation because they did not have the necessary oil with them to maintain their light. The sin of negligence doomed them. So it is with every believer, they say, who at conversion receives the Holy Spirit, of which the oil is a type, but goes back into sin. He will not enter the marriage.

I have heard this viewpoint vehemently criticized and condemned by those who believe in the Calvinistic side of theology. They believe in the eternal security of the believer. This person is represented in the virgins that had oil and went into the marriage with the Bridegroom. The foolish virgins represent those that profess Christianity but are without simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their portion is outside the scene of divine blessing.

DIFFERENT BELIEFS IN ESCHATOLOGY

I refrain from entering into the controversy between Arminianism and Calvinism at this juncture. Instead I want to bring to your notice some of the different beliefs in the realm of eschatology.

There are teachers of the Word who see the ten virgins as representing the Church of God. They look upon the five wise as the faithful saints; the five foolish as the unfaithful. The wise, they affirm, will have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom Glorious; the foolish will be made to experience the punitive process of the Great Tribulation. These teachers believe in a partial Rapture at the coming of the Lord.

Another school of thought, which repudiates the partial Rapture theory, believes that the five wise virgins will be in the Rapture but the five foolish will be left behind for judgment. It is another way of telling us that only the Rapture of the saints is given here.

A large segment of believers adhere to the teaching that this parable presents the godly Remnant in Israel in the End Time, or in the Great Tribulation era. The Church, they say, is not seen at all.

“In the Twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew,” says one exponent of this belief, “we are still altogether on Jewish ground, and the scenes described are those which shall be enacted on the earth, not in heaven. And not at the End of Time, nor at the End of the World, but at the End of the Jewish Age. This is “The End” so often spoken of in chapter 24. This present Church Age is not contemplated at all. The Dispensation in view is that in which the words were spoken, and which, though temporarily interrupted by the coming in of the parenthetical Church Age, is yet unfinished; and which cannot be completed until the Church is taken out of the way. “Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins” (v. 1). This word “then” marks the exact time indicated by the parable uttered by the Lord. The word means “at the time.” (Compare Ch. 24:45-51 and Ch. 25:1, 14, R.V.)

Last, but not least, there are those who teach that the parable describes not the Church, neither the godly Jewish remnant, but Christendom.

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

I have purposely stated the various views on this parable so that you might pay particular attention to the exact words employed by our Lord. Here is what He said:

“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. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And 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. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh” (Matt. 25:1-13).

It is imperative that I call your attention to the first word in the parable, the word “then.” As you know this is a conjunction which joins that which has gone before with that which is to follow. Personally I feel the Lord is simply continuing His Discourse about Christendom which He had begun in the parable of the wise and evil servants at the close of chapter 24.

I am quite aware that everybody does not see Christendom in the parable mentioned but simply a continuation of the

godly Jewish Remnant in Great Tribulation days set forth in the faithful and wise servant. Hence they link the parable of the ten virgins with the Remnant. They do not believe the Lord has the Church anywhere in the Discourse, nor do they admit the larger idea of Christendom. Everything in the Discourse, according to their view, will be fulfilled in the seventieth week of Daniel.

Others, on the other hand, do not differentiate between Israel and the Church and in consequence have the Church in the entire Discourse which means that she must experience the horrors of the Great Tribulation. Such a conception leads to all kinds of erroneous teachings. To miss the way here is to wander in the wilderness of bewilderment and to have little light along the highway of prophecy. It is of the utmost importance to know that God differentiates between Israel and the Church, and that He never has the Church in prophecy. She is outside that realm altogether. Israel alone is God's timepiece and is vitally linked with times and seasons. I wish my brethren could see this elementary, yet fundamental, truth in Scripture.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION NOT IN PARABLE

I have investigated this parable from every conceivable angle to ascertain whether the Great Tribulation might be here, but without success. It is passed over in silence in all the three parables which deal with Christendom as irrelevant to the truth in mind. The Lord is teaching other things which Christendom must face as her responsibility.

Those who believe the Great Tribulation figures in this parable would have us believe that the saints sleep in this crisis hour. I fear they are asking us to believe too much! It seems so contrary to what the prophetic Scriptures teach about the Elect in that day. Let me refer you to the situation with the Elect then.

ELECT IN TRIBULATION AGE

You will find that the Elect in the Tribulation Age will be persecuted, even unto death. Martyr fires will burn at that time. The Roman Dictator and his accomplice in evil, the Antichrist, will employ their power to exterminate the saints (Rev. 13). I hardly think there will be any occasion to sleep under such diabolical pressure!

It occurs to me, too, that during the Tribulation Age the Elect will be fully engaged preaching the Gospel or the Kingdom (Matt. 24:14). They will carry the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. The results of their preaching are given by the Apocalyptic Seer who depicts an innumerable host of Gentiles saved and who pass through the Great Tribulation horrors and enter the Kingdom in triumph (Rev. 7).

Finally, the Elect are much like the Issachers of David's day. They will have understanding as to the times. Of them Daniel speaks, saying, "The wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:4). To have understanding as to what is happening, and going to happen, will keep sleep from them! Let me briefly set before you seven things they will understand.

First, they will understand the full implicate of the 490-year prophecy stated by Daniel (Ch. 9:24-27). That which has been so hazy to many in the Church Age will be perfectly understood by them. They will know that the period began when Artaxerxes gave commandment to build Jerusalem and that it was exactly 483 years until their Messiah was crucified (Neh. 2). Then, too, they will appreciate that the Church Age was a parenthesis in the program of God for Israel. How eagerly they will await the signing of the seven-year covenant between Israel and the Roman Prince! Then will follow the Kingdom Glorious.

Second, they will understand the spiritual significance of the seven-year covenant. They will realize that it is "a covenant with death, and an agreement with Hell" (Isa. 28:18). It is Israel's outward evidence of her inward unbelief in

Jehovah. She will rather trust to Rome's military might than in the Almighty Arm of Jehovah God. Such knowledge will cause the Remnant to steer clear of the pact. They will know that this dastardly, diabolical act will bring down the wrath of God upon the nation before He intervenes on their behalf.

I cannot but believe that the Tribulation Age will be pregnant with interest for the Remnant. They will be seated in the royal boxes witnessing the drama of world events pass before their eyes. How interesting for them to see the revival of the Roman Empire in its ten-kingdom form! They will follow the action of the Supreme Dictator as he uproots three kingdoms and then the spontaneous decision of the remaining seven to be under his dictatorial rule (Dan. 7). They will appreciate that he will receive his power, and his seat, and great authority from Satan which will make him invulnerable and invincible in the eyes of his devotees (Rev. 13:1-4). They will also behold the plight of their own nation as it faces the Great Northern Confederacy headed up by Russia, the hordes of Asiatics, and the angry Arab powers all united in their determination to exterminate it. It is this factor which facilitates and expedites the signing of the Covenant between Rome and Israel. The covenant simply means that all the might of the ten-kingdom Empire of Rome will act on Israel's behalf in the event of an unprovoked attack from their northern or eastern neighbors.

Third, they will understand that the seven-year covenant is divided into two equal parts of three and a half years. The first part will be characterized by peace, yet, at the same time, it will be fraught with feverish preparations by all the nations for the approaching zero hour. The latter part will introduce the Great Tribulation which means war on an international scale. This will eventuate in Armageddon and culminate by the return of Christ in great power and glory.

Fourth, they will understand that the middle of the seven-year covenant will see the ousting of Satan and his satellites from the heavenlies to earth (Rev. 12). He will come to make

his final bid to offset the purpose of God for Christ by seeking to exterminate both Israel and the entire human family. This is the moment when the Great Tribulation begins.

Fifth, they will understand that the Antichrist will surreptitiously present himself as God in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week (Matt. 24:15 with II Thess. 2:3-4). This will be the Lord's sign to them to flee (Matt. 24:16-19).

Sixth, they will understand that the King of the South will trigger the conflict between East and West by invading Palestine in the middle of the seven-year period (Dan. 11:41). This will enable them to make their escape to the mountains ahead of time. To be forewarned is to be forearmed!

Seventh, they will understand that Jesus their Messiah has a place prepared for them which will preserve them from the fierce onslaught of the Great Red Dragon. Here they will be kept till the holocaust is over (Rev. 12:6). While the entire world is undergoing a tremendous scorching from the fiery judgments of God they will be perfectly immune. What a moment for them when their Deliverer comes out of Zion to effect deliverance for them (Rom. 11:26)! They will return to the once-beleaguered Jerusalem now freed from enemy aggression and terrible devastation and soon to become the metropolis of the world. How they will rejoice in Jehovah Jesus!

In the light of such knowledge I cannot conceive of this Remnant going fast asleep! Indifference to their Messiah in this critical hour is impossible. No, again I say, I am unable to place the Great Tribulation era exclusively in this parable. It cannot bear that interpretation.

What then is the interpretation of the parable? I believe it cannot be ascertained by putting either the Church, or the godly Jewish Remnant, exclusively, in it. To put either here is to face difficulties insurmountable. The only practical way to understand the parable is by seeing it as a figure of Christendom. It is the professing church from its earliest hours till it meets the coming Bridegroom.

FIRST MOVEMENT—FORWARD

The parable has four distinct movements. The first suggests a forward movement, the ten virgins "went forth to meet the Bridegroom" (v. 1): the second sets forth a movement of failure, "they all slumbered and slept" (v. 5): the third movement speaks of the divine fiat at the midnight hour which announces, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" (v. 6): and the fourth movement strongly suggests finality, "the Bridegroom came" (v. 10).

As I have said, the opening statement in the parable suggests a forward movement. The early Church moved forward towards the Second Advent of Christ. There was a real expectation of His coming. You can see this truth everywhere in the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation.

Every message in the Acts is impregnated with the blessed hope and the appearing in glory of Christ. After Pentecost Peter declared that the heaven must receive Jesus until the "times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). James, too, at the Jerusalem Council, quoting the Prophet Amos, said that "God . . . will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David" (Ch. 15:13-18). Then Paul, before King Agrippa, told how he was in his presence as a prisoner for "the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers"—the hope of the resurrection at the Second Advent (Ch. 26:6-8).

The Church Epistles certainly bear record of this same glorious, soul-thrilling truth. Take the Thessalonian Epistles as an example. Those saints had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven . . ." (I Thess. 1:9-10). The Apostle had the same testimony to give about the Corinthian saints, for, they were "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:7). Of the Philippians it is said that they were looking for the Saviour to change their bodies into His own body of glory (Phil. 3:20-21). And so I could go on mentioning all the churches and show that they all "went forth to meet the Bridegroom."

It is quite obvious that the Revelation was written to bring into relief the Second Advent of Christ and all that it will mean to the creation and to all creatures. The first item on the Divine agenda shows redeemed persons in heaven in the twenty four Elders (Ch. 4); then come the redemption of the inheritance (Ch. 10); the restoration of Israel (Ch. 14); the binding of Satan and the millennial reign of Christ (Ch. 20). These truths acted like a magnet to attract Christians to Christ and to ardently await His return. This divulges the reason why the early Christians used the word "Maranatha" as they met and parted. It simply means "Our Lord Cometh."

How quickly the heart condition changed. Deflection and declension were in evidence when the Lord leveled the indictment against the Ephesian Church, saying, "Thou hast left thy first-love" (Rev. 2:5). And this continued until the Lord said, "I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16). It is here we come to the second movement in our parable.

SECOND MOVEMENT—FAILURE

The second movement in the parable sets forth failure. We read, "They all slumbered and slept." This condition predicated a lapse in faith, love and hope. Their eyes were off the Man in the glory. Since He did not return to set up His Kingdom they were disheartened and unbelief possessed them. How like Israel in the early days of their wilderness journeyings! Seems like history repeating itself. Israel complained about Moses being in the presence of God; and said, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exod. 32:1). They felt he would never return to take them into the Promised Land.

There is always a positive danger when we take our eyes off the "blessed hope and the appearing in glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." To relegate the return of Christ to some future time is to leave ourselves open for all kinds of worldliness and even the subtleties of Modern-

ism. I know of no better preservative from sleep than to expect Jesus to come at any moment.

I have been greatly struck by a statement made by my dear departed friend, Dr. H. A. Ironside, who writes in his book, "The Lamp of Prophecy," this pertinent word. "Some years ago," he says, "it was my great privilege to sit at the feet of Dr. A. T. Robertson as he gave a course of lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians directly from his Greek New Testament in Calvary Baptist Church in New York City. He was conducting a ministerial conference, and it was my privilege in that conference to give a series of addresses from my English Bible (because I am not scholar enough to give them from a Greek Testament and most folks are not scholars enough to follow me if I were) and I was rather gratified to see the great man sitting down before me every day. I recognized Dr. Robertson as undoubtedly the outstanding Greek scholar of America, if not of the world, and yet that dear, kindly man of God sat and listened to a poor, insignificant person like myself, and he was just as gracious and attentive as anyone could possibly be. I went through the two letters to the Thessalonians, and at the close of the last address, Dr. Robertson came to me and said, 'Well, this is the first time that I have ever listened to anyone go carefully through those Epistles from the premillennial standpoint, and I must say that my judgment has gone with you through the entire series. I have never definitely declared myself as a premillennialist, but I think if I had my life to live over again I would be much more positive concerning this, for I have never in my ministry known a premillennialist who was a Modernist.' "

It is said of the three favored disciples, Peter, James, and John, that they slept in Gethsemane and on the Mount of Transfiguration. This rendered them oblivious to the sufferings and glories of Christ. The Lord also predicted that while men slept the enemy sowed tares (Matt. 13). He had in mind the Christian Church and very probably referred to the same period of time as He mentions in our parable. Irreparable

damage is done when the Church sleeps. Both Calvary and Kingdom truths are indifferently treated and there is no spiritual acumen to detect evil doctrines when propagated by Satan's emissaries. How applicable to the professing Church in the fourth and fifth centuries! It was then that Romanism began to flourish as a religious and political power and spread abroad her heathenish doctrines with the cover of Christianity. For 1,000 years afterwards, a period known as the Dark Ages, Romanism held sway. The Cross of Christ lost its true meaning and was replaced by a crucifix; the Second Advent of Christ was practically offset by a vague belief in a last day general resurrection and final judgment for all. What else but evil could infiltrate into Christendom when the professing Church was so asleep to those vital truths!

There is always the ever present danger for us to go to sleep. We require the ministry of the blessed Holy Spirit to keep our eyes open to the precious truth about Calvary and the coming Kingdom glories of Christ. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee" is a timely exhortation. I have the idea that the Devil's masterpiece in this last moment of the Church Age is to divide the saints on the truth of the Second Advent so that they will become disgusted with it and throw it overboard. He wants them to be torn asunder, have no settled convictions, and leave it out of their curriculum. In this way he lulls them to sleep. May we not be ignorant of his devices but always cherish in our hearts that Jesus may come today.

THIRD MOVEMENT—FIAT

I come now to the third movement in the parable. This brings into relief the Divine fiat which announced the coming of the Bridegroom. You will notice how the time element is stressed. The cry went forth at "midnight," which is the hour prior to the rising of the Morning Star and which ushers in the Sun of Righteousness. I take it to mean the era in church history when the truth of the Second Advent of Christ

was once more brought to light and began to be sounded forth.

The Reformation, led by Martin Luther, discovered anew and afresh the long lost doctrine of justification by faith. This discovery was a repudiation of Rome's false system of justification by works. It was really a return to the simple Gospel of Christ which offers a free and full salvation to every believer. The inevitable effect of such a belief was a tremendous exodus from Romanism. Thus the Protestant Age was born. However, it has to be confessed that the Reformation never altered Rome's conception of the heavenly calling of the Church or the blessed hope of the believer. It clung to the unscriptural doctrine of a general resurrection and a last judgment at the Second Advent of Christ.

The next great spiritual awakening came under the Wesleys. They proclaimed the Gospel of Grace to sinners and sanctification for the saints. It was a definite call to holiness. Once again a great rift took place in Christendom. Thousands left the established Protestant churches for the simpler form of worship. This was the birth of Methodism. Despite a closer return to New Testament principles and teachings than was experienced under Lutherism much was left to be desired in the realm of eschatology. There was practically no change of belief in the Second Advent of Christ.

At long last a movement of the Spirit of God came in the middle of the nineteenth century when He uncovered to His saints the truths concerning the Church and the Second Advent of Christ. It became crystal clear that the Church is altogether different from Israel, God's Old Testament people, and that it occupies a special place in the Divine purposes. Linked with the Church is the Rapture which necessarily antedates the Kingdom on earth. As in the previous two movements, Lutheranism and Methodism, there came a withdrawing from churches, and saints began to meet every Lord's Day to break bread under the leadership of the Holy Spirit alone. They left themselves free for the guidance of the Holy

Spirit in their worship, and from them sounded out the Word about the Second Coming of Christ. Their sound went forth into all the world and soon the return of Christ was the chief interest of believers. Prophetic conferences were the order of the day with the Prophetic Scriptures opening to their understanding. The midnight cry was heard, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him."

The first half of our twentieth century has confirmed beyond any controversy whatsoever that the Bridegroom is about to come. Signs multiply on every hand which indicate that the End Time is upon us. You have but to realize that we have seen the Jews return to their land and become a nation; Russia become the head of a great confederacy of nations stretching into Eastern Europe and far out into Asia; and the Western nations clamor for a United States of Europe. In our day we have witnessed the world divide itself into two camps, East and West, a situation which precipitates the final Battle of Armageddon. I believe we are approaching this battle with ever quickening steps.

Daniel tells us that in the End Time "many shall rush to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Ch. 12:4). How true this is! It is not so long ago when people seldom traveled outside their own country but today we think nothing about visiting other countries and even going around the world. The plane has changed travel conditions. And now that the "JET AGE" is with us travel shall be easier and used by more people than ever. Plans, too, are well ahead to take men into outer space to the planets there. As for the "increase in knowledge" we stand spellbound at the advancement in science which has brought us radio, radar, and television, to say nothing about the splitting of the atom to release the secret force of the universe. Within the last few years we have been brought to the brink of total destruction and thus brought into the era of the Apocalyptic judgments. There remains no doubt in the minds of all thinking people that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The announcement of the Bridegroom's coming stirs the virgins to action. We read that "all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.' It is the idea of great activity. The sense of the End is keenly felt by all. The fact that men everywhere, regardless of nationality, creed or culture, refer to it, is proof enough that we now approach the world's greatest and gravest crisis.

In my little booklet, "Is This the End-Time?", I remark that in the last few years it has made no difference who has written or spoken, whether he be a statesman, scholar, scientist, journalist, radio-news commentator, the man on the street, or the theologian, all have indulged in the same thought, and made the same prediction. All are under the impression that we have approached the brink of international disaster. As born-again ones we know this means that "the Bridegroom cometh."

Religious activity throughout Christendom may be deducted from the statement in the parable that "the foolish said unto the wise, 'Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.'" It is here the clear-cut difference between the virgins comes to light. Some had oil, others had none. The distinction is not external but internal. Those that had the oil possessed the essential thing, for the oil speaks of the Holy Spirit of God. It is His presence in the believer that fits him to go into the marriage. The person without Him, no matter how religious he may be, is none of His.

There is no ground here to warrant the belief that only the saints that are "watching" will be caught up at the Rapture, and those not "watching" will be left to go through the Great Tribulation. In the first place, it is not the Rapture that is in view but the coming of the Bridegroom to begin Kingdom festivities; and, in the second place, the emphasis is not on "watching" but on having the oil. If "watching" were the criterion for going into the marriage, then all would

have been excluded, for "they all slumbered and slept." Then, too, if "watching" were to be rewarded by an entrance into the marriage, all would enter, for "all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." They all went forth for the second time to meet Him. But that was not so, for some went into the marriage, others were shut out.

FOURTH MOVEMENT—FINALITY

The fourth movement in the parable is summed up in the word "finality." We read that "the Bridegroom came . . . and the door was shut." Yes, He will come despite all that the scoffers say. He is faithful that promised. On the eve of His departure for Calvary He said, "I will come again." His last words to John, and to His own blood-bought people were "Surely, I come quickly."

What a moment when He comes! First, He will gather His own to Himself that they might accompany Him to the Eternal Throne where He will be united with His New Testament Bride in the bonds of holy matrimony. Then He will come back with her, His Bridal-Wife, to initiate His world-wide Kingdom. This will bring Christendom's checkered history to a close. The testimony of God that has been carried on by the 144,000 sealed Jews and the innumerable host of saved Gentiles in the midst of Babylon's apostasy and in the presence of the Antichrist's blasphemous reign will be rewarded by their entrance into the marriage, while apostate Christendom will suffer eternal loss. That sums up the described destiny of the wise and foolish virgins.

One word in closing. You will never find anywhere in Scripture that God will shut the door in the face of His own child. That is untenable and unreasonable. That child has the same position as Christ. He is "accepted in the beloved." I know, too, that you will never find in the Bible that God will say to one who has received the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, "I never knew you." The opposite is true. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," says Paul. Indeed, in this Age of Grace

the believer is a "member of His Body," a "stone in the spiritual house," a "brother of Christ's," and a "son of the Father." How sweet and precious are the words of our lovely Lord, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

CHAPTER TWELVE

CHRISTENDOM: THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

IT WILL BE our privilege and pleasure to deal now with the third parable in the Olivet Discourse which visualizes Christendom. I refer to the parable of the talents. For our mutual help and blessing, let us read the entire portion to be considered.

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And 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. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou 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. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 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. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, 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. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which 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" (Matt. 25:14-30).

I have remarked before that there are three parables which describe Christendom. Each one has the focus on a different idea. It is quite obvious that the stress in the first parable of the wise and evil servants is on sustenance. The servants were responsible to the household, "to give them meat in due season" (Matt. 24:45). Here we see something of the interest the Lord has in His own blood-bought ones. He desires to see them fed with food convenient. They must be built up in their most holy faith. For this reason He gives the commission to Peter, and to all His gifted servants, "Feed My Lambs," and "Feed My sheep" (John 21:15, 16). They must be sustained, supported, and satisfied at all costs.

In the parable of the ten virgins the central thought is that of suitability. It was the oil in the vessel that gave the wise virgins the right of entrance to the marriage (Matt. 25:1-13). The oil speaks of the Holy Spirit who gives suitability to every believer for the coming Bridegroom. He imparts the divine nature, seals and indwells the saint. Paul cries, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9).

SERVICE OF THE MASTER

This third parable of the talents, which we have just read, bespeaks service. Each person is given the Master's goods, or talents, according to his ability. He is responsible to use the talents in the service of his Master. It means that he must be about his Master's business. There must be singleness of eye, devotedness in purpose, and total abandon to the work committed to his trust.

The thought of service is involved in the first parable where the household is in view. It is serving the household of faith. In the third parable, however, it is the world of mankind that is served. The first is primarily ministry to the saints; the latter is mainly to the sinner. All the household must be ministered to: all the world must hear the Gospel. Thus the commission is crystal clear to all gifted servants of the glorified Christ.

In these last days the general tendency in Christendom is towards denominationalism. Each denomination is becoming like a watertight compartment. It has its own servants with a ministry peculiar to its beliefs. Unless a servant hues to the denominational line he is bitterly persecuted and eventually ostracized. What the Master commands and desires is totally disregarded, and in practice is denied, to satisfy the craving of the flesh for authority. Thus the saints are raised up by Satan to persecute the servants of God. May you never be so used, beloved, or be party to such wicked conduct. Paul speaks a very timely word in this connection, saying, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14:4).

May I point out, by way of a parenthetical remark, that this parable is a similitude of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is self-revealing. It means that Christendom, not the Church, is before our Lord. The mystery side of the Kingdom of Heaven began when the Lord ascended on high and will conclude when He returns to set up His world-wide Kingdom. You are in the same area of truth here as set forth in the

memorable 13th chapter where He relates the seven parables about the "Mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens." It includes the Church Age but goes beyond to the Tribulation Age, or Daniel's seventieth week.

AN ABSENT MASTER

Four simple yet profound truths pass before us in panorama in this parable. In the first place you have the sense of an absent Master. He takes His journey into a far country, then, after a long time, returns to deal with His servants. That which holds our interest next is the assumption of responsibility by the servants. Each one is given his Master's goods with which to do business. The first is given five talents; the second, two; and the third, one. Automatically there follows what is true to life, the accountability of the servants to their Master. Each one relates what he did with the Master's goods. Finally, there is the Master's award to the faithful ones and His total displeasure with the unfaithful one.

In this particular part of the Discourse the Lord emphasizes that He will be absent in glory for some considerable time. He mentions it in connection with the evil servant who said, "My Lord delayeth His coming" and then plunged into immorality. It comes before Him again in the parable of the ten virgins for they all slumbered and slept while the Bridegroom tarried. Now He declares that He will take His journey into the far country, Heaven, and after a long time, return to take issue with His servants.

You will agree that this is altogether different from that which we have considered in the Jewish part of the Discourse. There we have no mention made about the long time He will be in the Glory. He simply says that wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, and pestilence would come in due course but He stresses the fact that when the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached to all nations and when the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple and the Great Tribulation is under way, the end will come. He concentrates more

on the final seven years of Daniel's unfulfilled prophecy. And in the next section of the Discourse He relates what will happen when He comes (Matt. 25:31-46).

This protracted absence of Christ is peculiar to Christendom. He left the world on Ascension Day for Heaven and after some 1,900 years He is still there. That is a long time according to man's reckoning. Yet it brings out His grace and patience with sinful men and nations. He is not willing that any should perish. At the same time it allows opportunity for the program of God to develop on earth. In days past God could have taken Israel from Egypt to Canaan in a few days, but "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." It is likewise true that He could have sent His Son earlier but waited "until the fulness of the time was come." It was at the "end of the ages He appeared." And somehow I have the conviction that the present waiting of Christ is to permit the stage to be set on earth after which the Divine Restrainer shall be withdrawn to allow the Man of Sin to come "in his time."

HAPPENINGS ON EARTH

That Christ should sit on the Father's Throne for so long is something new in Divine Revelation. It is really a New Testament truth, for the Old Testament saints knew nothing of it. As far as they were concerned, they saw no interim of time, either short or long, between His enthronement in Heaven and His establishment on the Throne of David. But Jesus prepared the hearts of His disciples for this present Age of Grace in different ways. Here are some of the happenings on earth while He is in Heaven:

The Lord's Upper Room Discourse by-passes the time element between His going back to His Father and His return to receive His disciples unto Himself. All He says is, "If I go away, I will come again" (John 14:2, 3). There is no committal as to time.

As the risen Man, the Lord told Peter about his decease then with almost the next breath spoke about John saying,

“If I will that he tarry till I come . . .” (John 21:18-22). Without question Peter must die ere Jesus comes again, yet He opens the door of hope for John to be alive when He comes. These are representative men. John represents those that “are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord” (I Thess. 4:17). The fact remains, however, that some little time would elapse between the ascension and the return of Christ—at least time for Peter to die.

The Lord also made it clear that during His absence the New Testament would be written. He did not specify the number of books, or suggest the names of the writers, but plainly said, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth . . . and He will show you things to come” (John 16:12-13).

It is hardly possible to read Matthew’s Gospel and not discern that the Lord intended to remain in Heaven a long time. This is definitely inferred in the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven (Ch. 13). For instance when He refers to the parable of the tares He makes mention of the men that sleep while the enemy sows his tares and that both have to grow until harvest time. This involves quite a time. Then he predicts that the Church will yet be built which, of course, is being done all through this Age of Grace (Ch. 16). At the close of His earthly life when He speaks about His rejection by Israel, He says, “Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord” (Ch. 23). And here in this prophetic foreview of events ahead, He mentions the fact of His being a long time away in each of the three parables which describe Christendom (Chs. 24 and 25). I do not have the time to fill out the details in each instance but evidence abounds that Jesus knew time would be necessary to develop the plan of God, before He returned to establish His Kingdom on earth.

Then, when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he said that the mystery of iniquity was at work in his day. It was the

Divine Restrainer who hindered iniquity from full development in the Man of Sin, but the time would come, when He would be removed to allow the Man of Sin's manifestation (II Thess. 2:6, 7). The implicate is that the Holy Spirit shall be in the world until conditions are ready for the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, to appear to play his part in the Divine drama. Almost twenty centuries have been required to set the stage for his debut, but once the Hinderer is taken out of the way, he shall come as the world's hero. His term in office will be short-lived for at the coming of the Lord he shall be consumed with the spirit of His mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming.

Finally, let me call your attention to the Book of the Revelation. The Lord commands John to "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Ch. 1:19). The Lord Himself divides the Book into three parts. "The things seen" refer to the vision in chapter one; "the things which shall be hereafter" have the prophetic future outlined from chapter 4 to the end of the Book; while "the things which are" specifically concern this present Church Age (Chs. 2 and 3). Here we have the seven churches, from Ephesus to Laodicea, in their historic march from century one until the Lord returns. It is the story of the professing Church in action during the Lord's absence. What a story of failure, over a period of some 1,900 years, that has been!

ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Master's final act, before making His long journey, is to give His goods to His servants. He gives five talents to one, two to another, and one to a third. Each man is given according to his ability. The talents are given for trading purposes. At once there is the assumption of responsibility on the part of the servants.

The differences in the talents given are the differences in ability. This ability was evaluated by the Master. He knew

the servant's aptitude, took into account his personality, his social standing, his education, his personal magneticism, and natural gifts. He knew the correct amount with which to entrust His servant. In another section of Scripture we read of the Holy Spirit "dividing to each man severally as He will" (I Cor. 12:11). It is Divine sovereignty in evidence adjudicating what is needful for the progress of God's business on earth. There is nothing haphazard with Him. He has business to do in the world and He chooses and gifts those who will do it.

What happens in this Age of Grace happened in Israel. Then He put His servants into their respective positions for the good of His people. The priests, the Levites, the army, and the people in general had a set work to do. There was no overlapping, nothing left undone, no one overly burdened. The Levites, for instance, were divided into three companies; the Kohathites, Merarites, and Gershonites. The Kohathites were responsible to carry the vessels of the Tabernacle when it was taken down; namely the ark, altars, table, candlestick, laver: the Merarites took care of the boards and bars, pillars, pins and sockets; and the Gershonites carried the curtains, hangings, and cords. Every man was in his place and did his own particular work. Of confusion there was none, perfect order and harmony obtained. The God of order was in control.

The one thing needful in our day is the recognition of the gifts given to the Church. These have been given by the Ascended Lord. They must not be treated with partiality, esteeming one person greater, and more important, than another. The exercise of the least gift is as essential as the exercise of the greatest. When both are exercised properly there is perfect adjustment and harmony. A local Church, with this kind of recognition, will operate smoothly, and spiritual health, with the fulness of vitality, shall be evidenced.

Have you ever considered the difference between the disciples before and after Pentecost? Before Pentecost they strove among themselves concerning who should be the greatest;

after Pentecost they recognized the gifts given without jealousy. The day the Holy Spirit came "Peter stood up and the eleven with him." No quarreling now as to who should take the rostrum! The man divinely fitted steps forward with the message of God and the others gladly stand by him. This is coordination. But Calvary had come. Death to the flesh with all its selfish ambitions had taken place. Pentecost had brought them a new power, never experienced heretofore, to equip them for the colossal task committed to them. The net result was 3,000 saved (Acts 2).

This, to me, is the secret of power. It lies in our appropriation of Calvary and Pentecost. At Calvary we learn death to self; at Pentecost we experience the mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God. Both are necessary if our investment of the Master's goods has to bring results. Otherwise, all our efforts will be but the motions of the flesh.

UNDERSTAND THE COMMISSION

I believe every servant of God should understand the commission. He should sit down quietly in the Divine Presence and read and re-read it until it becomes part and parcel of his life. Jesus says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Could words be clearer? They bear no second meaning. We are responsible to carry the Gospel message to every creature. No person must be denied the tidings of eternal life in Christ Jesus. He must hear that Jesus died and rose again, so that through simple faith in Him eternal life is obtained. That is fundamental to the servant that will serve his Master acceptably.

Then, too, every servant should wait upon his Lord to show him his sphere of service. The choice never lies with the servant. He has no say in the matter. The most gifted of servants knows not the need nor has he authority to go where he pleases. This is the absolute sovereign prerogative of the Lord. The servant must wait in the presence of his Lord, and say, "What wilt THOU have me to do?" I admit this entails

patient waiting upon the Lord and the spirit of total surrender to Him. It means entering the closet and shutting the door that the Master's voice might be heard. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters . . . so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God" (Psa. 123:2).

Once the servant knows where the Lord will send him then the investment can be made. It is gratifying to note that the servants with the five and the two talents invested all for the Master. It was a total commitment of themselves, and their goods, to the business of producing results. And that is exactly what is required of us. Nothing short of a total abandon to our Christ that we might spend and be spent in His service. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2).

How is it with you, beloved? Is your all invested in the wear and tear of life to produce material benefits for you and yours? Is that the whole bent of your life? Or do you live sacrificially that Christ might be set forth before men and women everywhere. If we save our life, we shall lose it; but if we lose our life, for Christ's sake, we shall find it. Remember our day on earth will soon be over, our history book closed, and all that we have done will be preserved or will perish at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE SERVANTS

I think the third point the Lord stresses here is the accountability of the servants. He tells us that "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (v. 19). Yes, although the time was long between His ascension and return, it remains that He kept His promise. That is good for us to keep in mind. "He is not a man, that He should lie; nor the Son of Man, that He should repent." Indeed, "He is faithful that promised."

Those servants were surely tested as to their patience and endurance by their Master's long absence. However, they held His promise to return near to their hearts. They neither

fainted nor fell by the way. Instead, they worked hard and waited hopefully for their Lord's return. I trust we will be like them.

It must have been a thrill for those servants to see their Lord and to place double the amount He gave them in His hand. The one that was given five talents returned ten to Him; the one who was given two returned four to Him. They doubled the invested capital. And what a joy to the heart of the Lord to behold such devotion and affection in the gain presented to Him!

I take it that the under-shepherds of the flock when they appear before the Bema will give an account of their service with real joy when the saints to whom they have ministered have responded to the ministry of Christ (Heb. 13:17). This should encourage ministering servants to present a well-rounded message so that their charge will respond in obedience to the will of God.

Paul anticipated giving his account to the Lord as a soul winner when he says to the Thessalonians, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His Coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (I Thess. 2:19-20).

Remember every man is personally accountable to the Lord for his service. No one will be called upon to answer for another. We are individually responsible to make full use of the goods given us. I am certain if we know and do the Master's will we will answer to Him with joy.

One of the terrible sins we as saints commit is to sit in judgment on our brother's service. Instead of encouraging one another to go on for God, "and so much the more as we see the day approaching," we criticize and condemn. Brethren, it should not be so. Probably, back of this wicked criticism is jealousy. The critics are jealous of the gift of the criticized. They see him being used of God, or doing work they cannot do, and they just cannot tolerate it. The result is evidenced in criticism. I can say without fear of contro-

versy that this is the work of Satan, our Adversary. May we not let him use us as his tool. Rather, "judge nothing before the time." "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ . . . So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10-12).

The servant with the one talent said to his Lord, "I knew Thee that thou art an hard man . . . I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine" (vs. 24-25). This man never knew the Lord. He was an empty professor of His Name. Whoever could call Jesus "hard"? That sin-atonement sacrifice He offered to God, and that wonderful grace by which He saves forever denies it. And I know that Jesus would never say of any of His own blood-washed ones, even to the youngest and weakest of them, "Thou wicked servant," nor will He ever consign any true believer to the outer darkness. This man's attitude proved his heart was estranged from Him.

THE AWARD OF THE MASTER

There is a real preciousness and unfathomable depth of meaning entailed in the awards of the Master. He says to the two servants that had doubled their talents, "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" (vs. 21-23).

To rule over many things anticipates the Kingdom. Administrative power and authority shall be given to them. What this involves must remain secret until the day of Christ's public manifestation but it tells something of value. All Christians shall be citizens in the Eternal City, the New Jerusalem; but those designated here shall have places of high honor. But they will have more, for they will enter into the joy of the Lord. That, to me, is in excess of, and far beyond, any administrative post. It is a partnership for eternity with the Lord in all the joy of His heart.

In the first instance I feel there will be real fellowship with Him in His having done the will of God. To see into the inner, deeper springs of Christ's human life on earth when He did the will of God in an obedience that led Him to the Cross (Phil. 2:9) and to understand more fully that death cleared away everything from God's side so that the Father could come out in matchless grace to receive His rebellious son (Luke 15) will be an award that is priceless.

We have read the parable of the hid treasure which the Lord found, and for joy thereof, sold all that He had so that He might buy the field. That treasure is the saints. What a joy they are to the Lord whose they are! This is the joy the faithful one will appreciate. He shall be able to plumb depths and climb heights hitherto unknown by mankind in the area of redemption (see Matt. 13).

Who can tell the joy of the Shepherd when He found the sheep that was lost? That is the joy awaiting the one who invests wisely his Master's goods (see Luke 15).

But there is more in the joy than these things. I believe it entails an intelligent apprehension of the vast purpose of God for Christ. What joy was Christ's when He apprehended the Divine purpose for Him! "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father," He said (Matt. 11:27). He could visualize, in panorama, the whole universe coming under His sway. That is the joy inferred here.

Beloved, Kingdom days are upon us. Man's day will soon be history and the Day of the Lord ushered in with Christ upon the Throne as King of kings and Lord of lords. What Christ has meant to us in this world, He will be made to us then. Our lives lived shall be translated into places of administration and into receiving increased power to enjoy Christ. May we live now in the light of His coming again.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING NATIONS

IN MY FINAL MESSAGE on the Lord's Olivet Discourse I will deal exclusively with the judgment of the living nations which will take place when Jesus the Judge returns to the world to assume universal sovereignty. By this time you are well aware that this Discourse is in three parts: the first, where Christ's Second Advent is seen in relation to Israel (Ch. 24:4-44); the second, where it is set in relation to Christendom (Ch. 24:45—25:30); and the third, where it is presented in relation to the nations of the world (Ch. 25:31-46).

It will serve a useful purpose to read the portion we will consider; so kindly turn to Matthew 25:31-46. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 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: for I was an hungred, 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, or 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. Then shall He say also unto them on the 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 we saw 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 to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

THE KINGDOM GLORIOUS

I have shown you, in the course of these messages, that the Lord brings clearly before us the supreme trial which awaits Israel in the Great Tribulation at the end of which He will be manifested as the Messiah, the Son of David; how that Christendom will face testings, peculiar to herself and behold Christ at His coming as the Heavenly Bridegroom, the Son of God; and now we will consider the judicial trial which will await the nations when Christ returns as the Judge, the Son of Man.

The Lord puts the spotlight on His Second Advent in this Discourse. It seems to me, however, as I read the Gospels where His words and actions are recorded, that this truth was ever before Him. The vision of the Kingdom Glorious seemed to sustain and encourage Him, the lowly, lonely Man of Sorrows, as He trod the pathway of faith.

I think of His prophetic outburst when He addressed Na-

thaniel, who had just confessed Him as the Son of God, the King of Israel, saying, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Unquestionably, He visualized the realization of Jacob's dream when the heavens and the earth, at the moment divorced on account of sin, shall be reconciled and the angels shall pay their tribute to Him, the Divine Ladder, the Reconciler (see Gen. 28 and Col. 1:20). Three days after this interview with Nathaniel was the marriage in Cana of Galilee. There the Mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine," to which He replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee, mine hour is not yet come?" (John 2:1-11). Surely, it was the hour of Kingdom blessing that flashed before His mind in which He will dispense blessing, in all its fullness, to both Israel and the nations at large! That hour, however, must await another day. Meantime, He turned the water into wine and thus gave them the earnest of the good things to come.

A little farther on in John's Gospel Jesus "lifted up His eyes, and saw a great multitude come unto Him" (Ch. 6:5-13). Naturally, He remembered the days when He fed Israel's teeming hosts with manna in the wilderness and anticipated the moment when He will make the nations sit at His table and be abundantly satisfied (Ex. 16; Psa. 145:15-16). Then follows the great storm on the lake which threatened the lives of His own, but He appeared for their deliverance (Ch. 6:15-21). Assuredly, He saw in the incident a foreshadowing of the deliverance He will effect for His own in the Great Tribulation era. Then there was the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead to be reunited with his sisters so that they might be in His presence to pour out their hearts' adoration (John 11 and 12). How impossible for Him not to see in panorama the drama of Israel's moral resurrection when those so blessed shall fellowship with Him, and all who are His own, throughout coming Kingdom days! (See Dan. 12:2-3.)

GLIMPSES OF THE KINGDOM

You will find that Matthew's incidents are all impregnated with glimpses of the Kingdom to come. Let me refer briefly to some of them.

Take the opening incident which describes the coming of the Magi to worship the King and lay their treasures at His feet (Ch. 2). What is this but a perfect picture of Kingdom days ahead when the Gentiles shall pay Jesus our Lord homage and worship (see Psa. 72). Then there is the encounter between the Savior and Satan, when Satan is so ignominiously overthrown, which ends with these suggestive words, "angels came and ministered unto Him" (Ch. 4:1-11). What a portrayal of Satan's eventual overthrow from the heavenlies to the bottomless pit while the angels ascend and descend upon the Son of Man! (See Rev. 12:7-12; 20:1-3; John 1:51).

The arrangement of the miracles performed by Jesus beautifully and perfectly sets forth God's dispensational dealings with men from the advent of Christ in grace to His advent in glory. Chapter eight introduces us to the leprous Jew being completely cleansed but shows Jesus the Healer rejected by the hierarchy of Israel. It is a graphic description of John's words, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (Ch. 1:11). Next comes the healing of the Gentile's servant on the principle of faith. The Lord instantly visualized coming Kingdom days when the Gentiles shall come from the east and west and sit down with the patriarchs in the Kingdom, an event to climax His present work among the Gentiles. What succeeds this Age of Grace is suggested in Peter's mother-in-law being healed and arising to minister unto her Lord. It is Israel back in the picture to fulfill the prophecies made concerning her. She will serve Christ in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom in the Tribulation era (Matt. 24:14). The Great Tribulation figures largely in the terrific storm that swept across the Galilean Lake which will threaten the very existence of the godly Remnant. Then

comes the casting out of the demons into the deep to permit the delivered man to sit at Jesus' feet, then to go back to bring the people of Gadara to Himself. It is the overthrow of Satan and his satellites that is foreshadowed which will give men the privilege and pleasure of serving Christ.

Quickly we come to the immortal parables of our Lord. Here He describes the Kingdom in mystery form but, on several occasions, the Kingdom in its coming manifested glory occupies His interest. I think of His panoramic view of the heavenly and earthly sides of the Kingdom when He said, "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend. . . . Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Ch. 13:41-43). The earthly side is predominantly in mind when He speaks of Himself as the Son of Man, whereas the heavenly side is in evidence when He refers to the Kingdom of the Father.

The Kingdom, in miniature, is certainly pictured in the transfiguration scene. There the Lord is glorified and with Him are Moses and Elijah while the three favored disciples gaze upon the scene. What a moment when the glorified Christ is revealed to His Israel, seen in the three disciples! Then shall we say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matt. 17).

From the Holy Mount to the Mount of Olives, the Lord constantly referred to His advent in glory. He spoke about His return as the Householder to reward the laborers (Ch. 20:1-16); as the Stone to grind to powder His enemies (Ch. 21:44); as the King's Son to be married (Ch. 22:1-14); and in this Discourse, the One to bring deliverance to His own and judgment to His foes (Chs. 24 and 25).

It is these things, beloved, which enable us to better understand these words, "Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

SOVEREIGNTY OF THE JUDGE

This thrilling prophetic foreview of the judgment of the nations brings four potent truths into relief. First, there is the sovereignty of the Judge. You note this in the holy angels who form His retinue and His authority to bring the nations to Jerusalem. Second, there is the summons to the judgment which all the nations shall unhesitatingly obey. Third, there is the subject matter brought up at the judgment which revolves around the treatment meted out to Christ's brethren by those gathered before Him. And fourth, there is the sentence pronounced on the judged. The sentence is one of eternal life or eternal punishment.

The sovereignty of the Judge is evidenced in these words, "When the Son of Man shall come in all His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (v. 31).

THE ANGELIC HOST

It is important to understand that two classes of beings will accompany Christ when He comes to reign. The first is the angelic host. Old Testament saints were aware only of this one class accompanying the Messiah. As far back as Enoch's time he prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14). Zechariah, too, declares, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee" (Ch. 14:5). Daniel also envisages this same company when He saw the Ancient of Days and "thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (Ch. 7:10). The same angelic host is described, in language almost identical to Daniel's, when Christ is invested with the absolute right to negotiate all the purposes of God (Rev. 5:11-12).

I cannot but believe that angels, not men, are meant in the above passages of Scripture. The word "saint" means holy one. The angels witnessed creation's dawn (Job 38:7); they

saw the Creator's debut in human guise at Bethlehem (Luke 2:12-14); and they will accompany Him when He assumes absolute world sovereignty. The Psalmist speaks of them as those that "excel in strength" (Psa. 103:20), while Paul describes them as "angels of might". (II Thess. 1:7). It is revealed that one angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians with one blow (II Kings 19:35). Perhaps you will endeavor to gauge the strength of "all" the angels that return with Christ to clear out of His Kingdom all things that offend!

SAINTS ACCOMPANY CHRIST

The second band that will accompany Christ at His coming is the saints. This truth is not divulged in the Olivet Discourse or elsewhere in the Gospels. It involves the Rapture beforehand which truth comes more fully to light in the Pauline Epistles and in symbolic fashion in the Book of the Revelation. Old Testament saints, Church saints, and the saints raised to life at the end of the Great Tribulation shall make up the complement. All shall be revealed in glorified condition. Paul says, "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (II Thess. 1:10). The Seer of Patmos envisioned them as "the armies of heaven" that follow the Rider on the White Horse (Ch. 19:11-14). He finally designates them thus, "I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not received the mark of the beast . . ." (Ch. 20:4).

An interesting comment is made about the saints in Kingdom days. Paul says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" and, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (I Cor. 6:2-3). This does not mean that men and angels shall be brought before us to be judged and then consigned to everlasting perdition. That is the sole prerogative of Christ. He tells us, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Again, He says that

authority has been given Him "to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (see John 5:22, 27). Our judging of men and angels simply conveys the idea of administration. We shall share the rule with Christ when He reigns supremely over all created intelligences. Another writer observes that "unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come." The reason is that the Son of Man, and His saints, shall be in absolute control.

THE SUMMONS TO THE JUDGMENT

The second point to note is the summons to the judgment. This is indicated in the words, "before Him shall be gathered all nations" (v. 32). Divine sovereignty issues the summons. In this instance, for the first time in the history of nations, their leaders unhesitatingly obey. They are not asked, "Will you come?" nor are they asked, "When can you come?" The command to appear in Jerusalem is given and responded to instantly. "Where the word of a KING is there is power." How insignificant, insolent man is in the presence of his God!

The Judge Jesus is described in graphic, symbolic language by the Patmos Seer. He sees "the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. 1:13-16).

I want you to concentrate on this description for a moment. Observe the "royalty of His bearing" in the "garment down to the foot;" the "righteousness of His nature" in the girdle of gold around His breasts; the "relationship of His Person," or the Eternal One, in the snow-white head and hair; the "revelation of His omniscience" in "His eyes as a flame of fire";

the "retribution of His justice" in "His feet like unto fine brass;" the "rareness of His majesty" in "His voice as the sound of many waters;" the "receptacle of His saints" in that He holds the stars in His right hand; the "rebuke of His mouth" in the sharp two-edged sword which proceeds out of His mouth; and the "radiance of His glory" in His countenance which shines as the sun in meridian strength.

This description stands forth in sharp contrast to that in the Gospels, but there He is the Son of Man in humiliation. Although He is confessed as "the Lord of the Sabbath," and as "the Christ, the Son of the Living God," yet He has not where to lay His head. As Son of Man He came to minister and to yield His life a ransom for many. This partly explains why He allowed men to judge Him, spit upon His face, and crucify Him.

JUDGE AND JUDGED

Now the tables are turned. The representatives of the nations are ushered into His presence for judgment. The Man Jesus, whom they judged, is now their Judge.

Will you kindly note that these men are brought to Jerusalem, the city of the Great King. Jerusalem is now, and will yet be, the captial of Palestine and the metropolis of the world. The men are not brought there for a "round table" conference. Their opinions on any particular subject will not be solicited or required. They are here to be judged, not to judge.

I trust I have made it clear that these men represent the nations from which they come. It is very important to understand this fact, for many believe that all the peoples of the different nations shall be called upon to appear in Jerusalem before Jesus at this time. But that is quite an erroneous idea. It has been our lot to witness something like this scene, in a very small way, in the trial of the German nation after World War II. For the first time in world history an entire nation was put on trial, or judged, for the crimes committed

during the war. Now we know that all the German people were not brought to the trial at Neurnberg. Yet they were all there in their representatives. Each man was tried separately, and in accordance with the magnitude of the crime, so the sentence was pronounced.

Another important factor evolves here to which we should pay heed. I refer to the judgment of each representative. He is held individually responsible to the Judge. I like a comment made about this in the "Scripture Union Daily Notes" which says, "In spite of the word 'nations' (Matt. 25: 32), the judgment deals with individuals. The pronoun 'them' in the same verse is of distinctive gender in the Greek text. There is no group condemnation, as there is no group salvation. Man ever stands as an individual before God." It could well be that some men may be connected with a government that acted contrary to God's will yet not be party to the deeds committed. There are usually Obadiahs in the house of the Ahabs (I Kings 18). God has always His 7,000 that do not bow the knee to Baal. These shall receive blessing from the Judge.

SUBJECT MATTER AT THE JUDGMENT

The subject matter at the judgment concerns the manner in which the judged have treated the brethren of Christ. Since the trial takes place immediately upon the Lord's return to earth after the Great Tribulation, it is feasible to believe that these brethren are the 144,000, or the godly Jewish Remnant. From the moment of the Rapture until Christ's return they shall be in charge of the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. It shall be their responsibility to evangelize the nations. Both Daniel and John agree that they shall suffer much at the hands of some nations. It is evident, however, that other nations, at least the representatives, treat them with great respect and provide help for them in that dark hour.

Let me hasten to say that while this is the world's last assize it is not the last judgment. We must never confound this

judgment with that of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20: 11-15). The nations are judged at the inauguration of the Kingdom; the Great White Throne judgment is at the Kingdom's close. There are exactly 1,000 years between them. Another noticeable difference is that only living men are judged when the nations are brought to Jerusalem, while it is the wicked dead that are judged at the Great White Throne. The two judgments give the details of how the living, or quick, and the dead are judged (see Acts 10:43). The nations are judged at Jerusalem; the wicked dead are judged in space. Then, too, at the judgment of the nations some are blessed and some are cursed; at the Great White Throne all alike are consigned to the ever-burning lake of fire.

BRETHREN OF CHRIST

The judgment of the living nations brings to light the indissoluble union between Christ and His people. He judges their treatment of them as their treatment of Him. To all He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (v. 40).

It is quite true that these brethren do not share the same relationship as the members of Christ's Body, the Church. Nevertheless, the saints in the Tribulation era shall be His brethren, as we are, and of them He shall not be ashamed. They are the apple of His eye, the trophies of His grace, the evangelists with His message, and His personal ambassadors to the nations. To touch them is to touch Him.

The implicate for all time is the same. The child of God is in closest union with Christ. To persecute one is to persecute the other. He still asks the persecutors, "Why persecutest thou Me?" I do not consider it strange that worldings should cause Christians to suffer; but it must seem strange to heavenly intelligences that Christians should be their brethren's strongest persecutors. I have known so-called Christians to indict other fellow-believers with sins never committed; to make their brethren suffer severe hardships by withholding

the necessities of life; and to refuse to speak to them either on the street or in the same Church. I know that we have our alibis. We affirm that "we are standing for the truth" while we deliberately plunge the sword into the Saviour's bosom.

I want to speak plainly, beloved. Let none of us, who act in the way described, think that we shall not incur the Lord's displeasure. Because judgment against our evil is not executed speedily we must not imagine that we shall escape. Remember that Miriam was smitten with leprosy for speaking against her brother, Moses (Num. 12). Moses, too, was not allowed to enter Canaan for speaking inadvisedly against Israel (Num. 20). Brethren, let us love one another with a pure heart fervently.

It should be made abundantly clear that although Christ tries these men on the basis of their behavior towards His brethren He does not teach the doctrine of salvation by works. That would contradict the otherwise plain statements about salvation. Salvation is by grace through faith, not self-works, but it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Human merit is forever rejected for salvation. The Lord Jesus paid the supreme price for sin at Calvary. God now requires only faith on our part. We must accept His Son and His finished Calvary sacrifice for salvation. However, good works always accompany faith. It is these good works demonstrated towards Christ's brethren which evidence their faith in Christ; and it is the lack of these which elucidate the absence of faith.

SENTENCE OF THE JUDGED

The sentence of the judged is contained in these crystal-clear words: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (v. 46). The first is the note of tragedy; the other, the note of triumph.

Some people would have us believe that the everlasting punishment means annihilation. But that is difficult to accept. We know that the word "everlasting" here is the same as that used in connection with God, salvation, life, and inheritance.

Nobody would dare dispute that God is everlasting, that salvation is everlasting, that life is everlasting, and that the inheritance is everlasting. Why then dispute, even deny, that the punishment is everlasting? It should also be remembered that you cannot punish a nonentity. If man is destroyed, or annihilated, he cannot suffer any kind of punishment. He simply does not exist. Yet Scripture assures us that man lives on after death and before resurrection. Both Lazarus and the rich man lived, according to the story of Jesus. The thief that died on the cross beside Jesus went immediately to Paradise. Believers today that pass from us are "absent from the body, present with the Lord." At resurrection, people will obtain bodies that are indestructible which will fit them to live in Heaven or in Hell.

EARTHLY KINGDOM BLESSING

Those that enter into life eternal pass on into the Kingdom Glorious. This does not mean that they go to Heaven. As a matter of interest they never go there. Their place is on earth under the benign sway of the King of kings. They form the nucleus of the nations that shall enjoy Kingdom blessings for 1,000 years before entering into the new earth for eternity. This company shall never die.

I like to link this company with those mentioned by John in the Revelation. They form a separate part of that innumerable host that have "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Ch. 7:14-17).

The Kingdom, so long promised, prophesied, and pictured in both Testaments is now present in grand reality. Man's

Day, with its sin and sorrow, its wars and rumors of wars, is now history. The darkness is past, the True Light now shineth. This is the "Day of the Lord" with its release from groans for the creation and the creature; its rejoicing for men and nations as they embark upon a millennium of peace and prosperity; and its reconciliation for the heavens and the earth. Yes, the age-long prayer taught the disciples by Jesus, "Thy Kingdom come," is now answered.

It shall be the good pleasure of the King to place the nations in their respective places in the Kingdom. The prophet declares, "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance" (Isa. 19:24-25). Thus the two rival nations, Egypt and Assyria, are brought together with Israel to play a leading part in the coming world administration. Their wounds are healed for ever.

Isaiah also asserts that Jerusalem shall be the metropolis of the world during the Kingdom reign of Christ. "And it shall come to pass in that day," he says, "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and come, saying, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2-3). Each year, throughout the 1,000-year reign of Christ, the leaders of the different nations shall travel to Jerusalem to worship Jesus "the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zech. 14:16). At this time they shall receive from Him the laws by which their different countries must be governed throughout the ensuing year. Supreme administration shall be in His hands.

The Psalms gives us an insight into the prevailing condi-

tions in millennial times. There is a strong suggestion of heart insubordination on the part of some of the subjects. They render "feigned" obedience, or an obedience that is forced upon them. I suspect these insubordinates are born in Kingdom days, and like all others born in sin, they require to be born again, otherwise, they will never be subject to the law of God, or to the God of the law, the King. Where lawlessness is expressed, instant punishment is administered. "I will early," or "morning by morning" as the Revised Version puts it, "destroy all the wicked of the land: that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord" (Psa. 101:8). Since this is the lot of those that dwell in Palestine (the land), we may well assume it is carried out on a universal scale. This is the day when righteousness reigns.

Millennial days will witness the longevity of life. Methuselah lived to be 969 years (Gen. 5:27) but this shall be surpassed. As I have already said, there shall be people here when the King returns that shall never die. All the saints shall experience health without the knowledge of either sickness or death. At the end of Kingdom days they shall pass on into the eternal state.

One of the reasons why we trust the Bible is its truth. It brings out the evils of good men and it does not by-pass the conclusion of Kingdom days under Jesus the King. It does not end, as do our fiction tales, with "they lived happily together ever afterwards." Indeed, it details the total breakdown of men after the thousand years. At the beginning of the millennium Satan, and his satellites, are consigned to the bottomless pit; but at its close they are released again. We read, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came

down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Rev. 20:7-9).

The Kingdom Age is God's final testing of man. He has tested him in innocence, under conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and now righteousness, but man is proven, under every testing, to be a total failure. To be absolutely candid, man is a rebel. He hates God and will not be subject to Him. Those who accept this divine verdict turn their eyes to Another, even Jesus the Son of God, and see in Him the Perfect One who has answered the Divine Ideal, put away sin, and become the object of faith as the Man in the Glory. This insures salvation and satisfaction.

Thus ends the drama of human history. The ultimate in the purpose of God is reached. At long last He is able to bring in a scene where righteousness shall dwell and where He will be all in all. The new heavens and the new earth will become home for all redeemed creatures, "and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

I must close on the note which introduces the Kingdom in its final, eternal state. It is absolutely magnificent. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:24-28).

With such a blessed hope in view,
We would more holy be;
More like our risen, glorious Lord,
Whose face we soon shall see.

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