

A look at

Matthew 24

and its

Context

*B*ut the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of
the glory of the Lord,
as the waters cover the sea.

-Habakkuk 2:14



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Introduction

There seems to be a vast amount of confusion on our Lord's words of Matthew 24. His words there have given rise to many unique and strange, such as Scofieldism (I know the roots of Scofieldism; much of his teaching can easily be traced back to a document offered to the Protestants in 1791 by a Roman Jesuit. The doctrine became a major foundation of the Plymouth Brethren movement. The Scofield Reference Bible clearly sets forth Plymouth Brethren Doctrine, a point clearly made by the Plymouth Brethren minister, H.A. Ironside. See *The Death of Victory*, King and Kingdom Publishers, by this pastor.) This pastor was trained up in Baptist churches that believed and taught with the attitude that C.I. Scofield's notes were part of the original autographs. I heard more than one speaker mock from the pulpit those of his hearers who did not have Scofield Bibles with them.

Though my mother had given me, as a young person, a Scofield Bible as a gift, it was not my first serious study Bible. After discharge from the Navy Sea Bees in 1965, I worked as a layman in a bus ministry. Bus ministries basically exist upon exciting emotions and promotions. I won a workers' promotion, and the prize was a good, new Bible. I asked my dad what kind of a Bible I should get, and he suggested a Thompson Chain-Reference. So the Bible I started with for serious reading and study was not a Scofield; therefore, I did not have the influence of Scofield's notes. However, his notes were regularly taught by every Baptist pastor and Bible teacher I came into contact with.

Divine Providence placed my wife and I in the "full time" ministry. Impressed to read the Scriptures, I set the early mornings aside to spend several hours just reading the Scripture in the Thompson Bible. After a few years, I felt I should start writing down what I believed was being said by what I was reading. Doing that and not having "notes" to influence my perception of God's word, I noticed that what I was seeing from Scripture was many times not in accord with what was being preached and taught from the same thing I was reading, particularly in the area of "last things." (It was implied from the teachers that the Old and New Testament were two separate books from God, and the Old Testament was not for us today, but I was insulated from the influence of the radical Scofield stand in that area by not having his book.)

The pastors under whom I served were and Bible teachers under whom I sat were, more or less, teaching Scofield's notes, though they would deny doing any such thing. They taught what they had been taught by those they considered good men. However, those good men taught, knowingly or unknowingly, Scofield's version of the word of God. Those men under whom I sat were convince they were being true to Scripture, when in reality they were being more true to the men whom they respected highly, e.g., Several years ago, I raised a question regarding a favorite "end time" passage to a very close pastor friend. I asked him what he was going to do with the clear teaching of the passage. I was surprised when he said, "This is the way I was taught by men I respect. This is the way I have taught it, and I am not going to change now." He admitted that the passage did not say what he had been taught, yet he was willing to reject the clear teaching of the passage in favor of what he was taught by men he respected.

I soon learned that if I expressed any thing contrary to what was "Politically Correct" according to Scofield (though the pastors would never admit that is what they were teaching, for they felt they were teaching Scripture), I would be mocked for not believing the word of God. However, being under the authority of the pastors of the churches we worked in, I kept the concerns to myself. But I did write down the questions and obvious contradictions between what was being taught and what I was convinced Scripture was saying. I then did serious research from Scripture concerning what appeared to me to be those contradictions.

Because what I heard and what I was reading differed so radically (e.g., Dispensationalism, among other things), I remained very quiet about the matter. I had collected books “along the way,” but the books were, with few exceptions (e.g., MH) dogmatically and radically dispensational, e.g., Oliver B. Green.

I knew of no other system of exegesis. Any departure from Scofield’s Arminianism was mocked and ridiculed from every acquaintance I had. Because what I was seeing from the Scripture and what all my friends and teachers were saying differed so radically, I kept quiet. I was sure I was a heretic, for I knew of no one who followed anything except Scofield’s Dispensationalism.

Divine Providence moved us into the pastorate in 1983. Out from under the strong Dispensational influence of pastors and teachers, I still could not bring myself to teach anything contrary to what was “PC” to the Dispensational crowd. I could find nothing to confirm what I was confident Scripture was teaching. Though I could not present Dispensationalism with a clear conscience, I had to do it. I was not going to present anything that could be considered new with me.

A very close pastor friend got “cross ways” with the Lord, and in about 1984, I bought much of his library. In his library, I found books that confirmed what I had been seeing from Scripture for the past several years, but had been afraid to teach. Thus started my progressive departure from Scofield’s Dispensationalism. A copy of *The London Baptist Confession of 1689* confirmed that I was not a heretic, for what I had been seeing from Scripture fit very well within that Confession. I soon learned that the earlier the books were first published, the more likely they were to be free of Scofield’s Dispensationalism. So I started rebuilding my library with authors from before Scofield’s time. I am especially partial to reprints, such as the ones by Klock & Klock or Sprinkle. (Preferred book list upon request. Spurgeon’s commentary on the book of Matthew helped free this Baptist pastor from the Plymouth Brethrenism in which he had been trained—*Matthew, The Gospel Of The Kingdom* is thus quoted freely.)

The vast majority of my pastor friends, obviously, remain Darbyites/Scofieldites. The fellowships I attend are dominated by Scofieldites, so I continually hear messages according to Darby/Scofield on Matthew 24. In fact, since my public departure from what is “Politically Correct” among Darbyite/Scofieldite Baptists, and my public non-Darbyite teaching, I have even been accused of attempting to personally destroy other pastors who dogmatically hold to the Darby/Scofield version of Matthew 24.

Being continually confronted with the Scofield version of Matthew 24, and having serious problems with the consistency of what was being presented, I came to the conclusion that I needed to do something to support what I was confident was being taught by the Spirit in that passage. So about 1988, I decided to seriously study out the passage to settle in my mind what the Spirit was indeed saying in that passage: According to Scripture, was the Darby/Scofield Dispensational view right or not? The following lengthy document is a result of that study. It, along with some other things, forced me to finally lay aside Scofield’s Dispensationalism, i.e., Plymouth Brethrenism.

When I realized that an honest examination of Matthew 24 did not confirm Scofield’s vision, I had to face facts and change some beliefs. The context of Matthew 24 clearly tells us that Matthew 24 was basically fulfilled in 70 AD. The problem I then had to confront was that if Matthew 24 is basically fulfilled, then many of the theories built on Matthew 24 being future had to be wrong.

The following is based upon these already documented facts:

First, Scofield’s notes are the codification of Plymouth Brethren doctrine. Scofield collected and summarized John Nelson Darby’s voluminous notes, and placed Darby’s teachings as notes and cross references in the King James Bible. (I will have to complement CIS for that task alone, for Darby’s writings are as redundant and confusing as any this pastor has ever read. CIS had to have supernatural aid to make any kind of order from Darby’s horrible disorder.) Darby claimed to be the fountain head of what is now known as the Plymouth Brethren. However, not only are Scofield’s notes not original with him, they were not original with Darby. Darby picked up his Dis-

pen sational teaching from Ed ward Irving, who ac quired a very large por tion of it from a 1700s Jes uit priest, La cunza, who wrote un der the Jew ish name, Ben- Ezra. In a book by the is pas tor, *The Death of Victory*, the preceding facts are throughly documented.

Sec ond, the Gos pel Church is the new *Is rael of God*. The Gos pel Church is the new na tion of God through which the Lord God now shows him self strong midst the evils of this world. With the death of Christ and the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, the old na tion of Is rael was cut off, and the new nation—the church made up of both Jews and Gentiles—was grafted into the root. The root is Christ. This fact that the Gos pel Church has re placed the old na tion of Is rael is throughly docu mented in an other book by this pas tor, *Israel's Identity/Israel's Conversion*. My book on *Identifying Identity* also contains documentation that the Gos pel Church has re placed the old na tion of Israel.

The Death of Victory consists of over 360 formatted pages (in standard hard cover book format), and *Israel's Identity* con sists of 90 8 ½ x 11 spi ral bound pages. Thus both are far to long to even begin to summarize or develop again. Therefore, because the above facts are already well docu mented, we will de velop nei ther in the fol low ing es say, but we will build on both.

Both *The Death of Vic tory* and *Israel's Identity*, as well as the fol low ing study in Mat thew 24, were out growths of my se ri ous ex ami na tion of the Scofield faith I had been taught.

Chapter I

Prophecy

There is proba bly more con fu sion about the Lord's words in Mat thew 24 than there is about any other por tion of Scrip ture. The ques tion arises, "Are teach ers us ing Mat thew 24 ac cord ing to its con text?" To an swer this ques tion, we must ex am ine Mat thew 24 in the light of its con text. Mat thew 24 was not given "out of the blue;" rather, it was the fi nal state ment of a mes sage that started in Mat thew 21.

Ex am ple: I was told of a man who was teach ing a his tory class in an edu ca tion semi nar. He had spend the en tire ses sion de vel op ing a point he made in the fi nal few min utes of his class. However, just be fore he made his con clud ing state ment, other classes had let out, and sev eral peo ple from the other classes en tered his class. All that those folks heard was his fi nal few state ments that he had worked hard to build to. The con clu sion of what he said was fully docu mented, fit ting per fectly into the pre ced ing teach ing. Nev er the less, those who stepped in on the con clu sion did not hear the pre vious teaching, so to them, what he said was totally mis understood. And the pas tor has been in "hot water" every since with those who heard only his con clud ing state ment, though the state ment was to tally cor rect. The pas tor's con clud ing state ment was clearly taken out of its con text, and every pas tor has had the same thing hap pen to him.

Clearly, those who use the state ments by Christ given in Mat thew 24 with out the con text of the pas sages lead ing up to it will mis un der stand what he said. In ten tional or un in ten tional ignorance of the con text of Christ's fi nal state ments in Mat thew 24 will lead to a false un der stand ing, as it did for the pas tor above.

Though there are several pas sages within Mat thew 24 that are com monly used as prophetic pas sages, a close ex ami na tion of the con text shows that they have al ready been ful filled. Prophecy is not fore tell ing events from the time of the reader; rather, proph ecy is fore tell ing events from the time of the writer and/or speaker. It seems that many of the un der stand ings of Mat thew 24 mak ing their rounds to day are based on the mis con cep tion that proph ecy is from the time of the mod ern reader.

A quick Overview

Mat thew 21 takes place 5 days before his death as the Passover lamb. In Mat thew 21, he offers himself to the “Jewish church” (MH), which rejects him according to prophecy. Christ then foretells “the doom of Jewish church,” with his final words of doom given in Mat thew 24. So we must pick up the message at the beginning and listen to it all if we will understand his concluding statements in Mat thew 24.

The Lord offered himself as the King, and the common people heard him gladly. (Mt. 21:1-11.) He then exercised his authority as King when he cleansed the temple. (vv. 12-14.) It is important to note that his Kingship must start in the “temple,” both in the individual temple of God’s Spirit and in the public assembly. The *chief priests and scribes* saw what he did and how the people loved him, and *they were displeased*. They question him, but he does not satisfactorily answer them, starting the final conflict that will end in his prophesied death. (vv. 15, 16, Ac. 2:23.) He departs to Bethany for the night. On his return to Jerusalem the next morning, he “cursed” the fig tree. While teaching in the temple, the *chief priests and the elders* confront him again; this time, they challenge his authority to teach. Rather than justify his authority, he questions them, and gives some parables. (Mt. 21:23-41.)

Then in v. 42, the Lord quotes to these men challenging his authority an Old Testament prophetic passage from Psalms 118:22 (*The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*). The quote created quite a stir, and the *chief priests and Pharisees* (the Jewish religious leaders were the builders of Ps. 118:22) clearly that he was talking about them. Peter also created a stir when he said the same thing to the same men, the Jewish religious leaders. (Ac. 4:11. Peter used again, 1 Pet 2:4ff. Paul also made reference to it, Eph 2:20; therefore, it is not a statement to be taken lightly.)

Closer Look

Let us now examine the events leading up to our Lord’s usage of Psalms 118:22. As we look at these things, we will also have a better understanding of Matthew 24. The events leading up to Matt. 24:21 actually start with Mat thew 16:21, *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples...* However, we will pick the events up starting in Mat thew 21:1 (Mk. 11:1; Lk. 19:29; Jn. 12:12).

Mat thew 21:1-11

Mat thew’s account of the order of events appears a little confusing: vv. 12 & 13 apparently are misplaced. We will, therefore, try to place it in the best order possible. The order is important, but not important enough to override what the Lord is teaching in each instance. We will follow A.T. Robertson’s *A Harmony of the Gospels*. I will number the days, but will not call them by their places in the week:

Chapter II

Day one

Christ’s triumphal entry on colt, weeping over city, healing in the temple:

Our Lord had a habit of spending the night in Bethany. On the morning recorded in Mark 11:1 (Matt. 21:1), as they were going to Jerusalem from Bethany, our Lord sent two disciples to get a colt. They brought the colt to him, and he sat upon it, and rode into Jerusalem. As He entered the

city riding on the colt, many of those around spread in the way their garments and branches they had cut.

The account of Jesus entering Jerusalem is recorded in John 12. John 12 opens by mentioning about Lazarus; thus the multitude was here because they heard about Lazarus, *whom he raised from the dead*, v. 9.

As he rode into Jerusalem, the *very great multitude* began to rejoice and praise God, and said, *Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the high est*, v. 9 (Lk. 19:37,38). What took place here fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. (Isa. 62:11; Zech. 9:9.) John 12:16-18 points out that the disciples did not understand at this time what was taking place.

Luke 19:39, some of the Pharisees among the crowd saw what was going on, and asked Christ to rebuke those who were praising Him. Of course, the Pharisees saw this praise as blasphemy. V. 40, Jesus tells them that if the people do not praise Him, the stones will cry out in praise.

The religious leaders become fearful of Christ's power over the people. (Jn. 12:19.) Evil men fear any one, truth or not, that might undermine their own evil power over people; this is one reason wicked civil authorities stand against Christianity, for genuine Christianity recognizes another King, Jesus. (Ac. 17:7.)

Drawing near to Jerusalem, Christ he wept over it. (Lk. 19:41 ff) He wept because the offer of peace brought by its King (himself) was rejected; he wept because he saw the terrible destruction that was to come upon the city because it rejected its King, v. 44. The twelve were with him as he rode into the city; they heard what he said. So Matthew 24 opens with Christ reminding the disciples of his words of Luke 19:41—the city was very soon going to be destroyed, so the disciples question him as to “when?”

We should notice what Christ did not weep over: He did not weep over what they were going to do to him; rather, he wept over the judgment of God against them for what they were going to do to him.

Note: We probably get far too concerned about what might happen to us at the hands of the ungodly, anti-christ crowd; on the other hand, we have very little concern over what is going to happen to us and to those around us at the hands of God. If we had more concern toward the Lord, no doubt we would try harder to reach others with the gospel of peace, as well as teaching them God's law.

Matthew 21:10, 11, as Jesus rode into town, the question was asked, *Who is this?* The answer was, *This is the prophet, Jesus...* The point is that they did not say, “This is the Promised Messiah” despite the mighty miracles he did that day after arriving in Jerusalem, v. 14ff. He is doing the mighty works and the people are praising Him as the son of David in the temple before the eyes of the *builders*, the religious leaders, vv. 14-16. The religious leaders were moved with indignation, and Christ quotes the Old Testament to them, Ps 8:2. The crowd this day at the temple contained many who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Matthew 21:17, Christ returns back to Bethany, Lazarus' home, and lodged there that evening.

Chapter III

Day two

Christ curses the tree, cleanses the temple, teaches the great multitude, and the Greeks ask to see Christ.

On the first day, Christ, riding on a colt of an ass, offered himself as the rightful king. The people rejoiced, and some of the religious leaders asked him to rebuke the disciples who were exalting him. Christ proceeds to a spot overlooking Jerusalem, and seeing its coming horrible destruction, weeps. Jesus then entered *into Jerusalem, into the temple*. He heals the blind and the lame who came to him in the temple. The religious leaders were moved with *indignation*, and again rebuked Christ. Christ then quoted Psalms 8:2 to them. Noting what is going on in the temple in the name of the “Lord,” he departs for the night.

The next morning, Christ returns to Jerusalem from Bethany. (Mk. 11:12ff. This is where Mt. 21:18, 19 fits.) Walking toward Jerusalem with the twelve, he hungered. *And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves* and thus promising figs, he went to it, expecting to find figs on it to satisfy his hunger. Upon arrival at the tree, *he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs*. Finding no fruit on the tree that appeared from a distance to have fruit, he says unto the tree in the presence of the twelve, *No man eat fruit from thee hence forward for ever*. (Mk 11:14. Matthew says, *Let there be no fruit from thee hence forward for ever*, 21:19.)

Mark makes an interesting comment about this tree (11:13): it had many leaves but no fruit, *for it was not the season of figs*. Then in Matthew 21:20, we read, *when the disciples saw it*. According to Mark’s account (11:20ff), they passed that way again the next morning. In other words, they did not see the withered tree until the next morning (the third morning in our counting).

The account of the fig tree is one of the more significant events of Christ’s ministry, for it opens the way for some very hostile confrontations with the religious leaders. Our Lord was in a habit of presenting a teaching, and then illustrating his teaching in a manner easily understood by the average person. The instance with the tree is one of those times.

The Fig Tree

The picture of the fig tree is used at times to illustrate the nation of Israel. (Mk. 13:28, Mk. 24:32, Lk. 21:29.) So let us observe a few basic points concerning this account of the fig tree:

First, the Lord was hungry, and desired fruit from it.

Second, he walked to it, expecting to find fruit for his enjoyment though he knew it was not the season for figs. Why did Christ expect to find figs when he knew it was not time for figs? An answer is given by John Gill:

And when he saw a fig tree, &c.] In the Greek text it is “one fig tree”, one remarkable fig tree: he must see a great many, as he went along; for a large tract of the Mount Of Olives was full of fig trees, and therefore called “Bethphage”: and notice has been taken already of the figs of Bethany: but he saw none that had such large and spreading leaves as this; for it was the time when the fig tree was just budding, and putting forth its leaves: wherefore he took notice of it; and though it was “afar off”, as Mark says, yet being hungry, he made up to it, expecting, from its promising appearance, to find fruit on it. This fig tree was “in the way”; by the road side, and probably had no owner; was common to anybody, and so no injury was done to any person by losing it: he came to it,

and found nothing thereon but leaves only: Mark says, “*he came, if haply he might find anything thereon*”; which must be understood of him as man; for as he hungered as man, so he judged and expected as man, from the appearance of this fig tree, that he might find fruit upon it; and which is no contradiction to his deity, and his having the spirit of God, as the Jew {t} objects; and especially since, as Bishop Kidder {u} observes, such an expectation is attributed to God himself, in Isa 5:2,4 and it may be added, and with regard to that people, of which this fig tree was an emblem, and designed by Christ to be considered as such in what he did to it. The same evangelist further observes, “*and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet*”. The word “yet” is not in the original text; which last clause is a reason, either why he found no fruit, or nothing but leaves upon it, because it was not a time, or season of figs: it was not a good fig year, so Dr. Hammond interprets it; and yet though it was not, since this tree was so very flourishing, fruit might have been expected on it: and also, it furnishes out a reason why Christ took so much pains to go to it, seeing there were very few figs to be had elsewhere, and this bid very fair to supply him with some in this time of scarcity: or else, as a reason why, besides its promising appearance, he expected fruit upon it, because the time of figs, that is, of the gathering of the figs, was not come: in which sense the phrase is used in Mt 21:34; [*And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.*] and is Bishop Kidder’s interpretation of the passage: and since therefore the time was not come for the ingathering of the figs, none had been taken off of it, the more might be expected on it. This sense would be

very probable, did it appear that figs were usually ripe about this time; but the contrary seems manifest, both from Scripture, which represents the fig tree putting forth its leaves, as a sign the summer is nigh, Mt 24:32 and from the Talmudists, who say {w}, that the beginning of leaves, or putting forth of the leaves of trees, is in the month Nissan, the month in which the Passover was kept, and so the then present time of the year; and who, from this time, reckon three times fifty days, or five full months before the figs are ripe {x}: so that these words are rather a reason why Christ did not expect to find figs on other trees, which he saw in great abundance as he passed along, because the time of common, or dinary figs being ripe, was not come; and why he particularly expected to find some on this tree, because it being full of leaves, appeared to be of a different kind from other fig trees: and was either of that sort which they call ..., "Be noth Shuach", as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures which were a kind of white figs that were not ripe till the third year {y}. This tree put forth its fruit the first year, which hung on it the second, and were brought to perfection on the third: so that when it was three years old, it had fruit of the first, second, and third year on it: this being such a tree, by its being full of leaves, when others had none, or were just putting out, fruit, of one year, or more might have been expected on it, when it had none at all, and therefore was cursed: or it might be one of that sort which brought forth fruit twice a year; for of such sort of fig trees we read in the Jewish writings {z}: and therefore though it was not the time of the common figs being ripe, yet this being one of the seasons, in which this tree bore ripe fruit, and being so very flourishing, might reasonably be expected from it: but there being none,

he said unto it, let no fruit grow on thee hence for ward for ever; or, as it is expressed in Mark, "no man eat fruit of thee here after for ever": for if none grew on it hence for ward, no man could here after eat of it. Both expressions design the same thing, the perpetual barrenness of the fig tree:

and presently the fig tree withered away: immediately, upon Christ's saying these words, its sap was dried up, it lost its verdure; its leaves were shrivelled and shrunk up, and dropped off, and the whole was blasted. This tree was an emblem of the Jews: Christ being hungry, and very desirous of the salvation of men, came first to them, from whom, on account of their large profession of religion, and great pretensions to holiness, and the many advantages they enjoyed, humanly speaking, much fruit of righteousness might have been expected; but, alas! he found nothing but mere words, empty boasts, an outward show of religion, an external profession, and a bare performance of trifling ceremonies, and oral traditions; wherefore Christ rejected them, and in a little time after, the kingdom of God, the Gospel, was taken away from them, and their temple, city, and nation, entirely destroyed.

{t} R. Isaac, Chizzuk Emuna, par. 2. c. 30. p. 421. {u} Demonstration of the Messiah, par. 2. p. 38. {w} Jar chi & Bar tenora in Misn. She vi ith, c. 4. sect. 10. {x} T. Hi eros. She vi ith, fol. 35. 4. {y} Misn. She vi ith, c. 5. sect. 1. & De mai, c. 1. sect. 1. & Mai mon. & Bar tenora in ib. {z} Misn. De mai, c. 1. sect. 1. & Mai mon. in i b. T. Bab. Eru bin, fol. 18. 1.¹

"This tree was an emblem of the Jews..." The man Christ Jesus came to his own people, the Jewish nation. Having no fruit of righteousness and having only "mere words, empty boasts, an outward show of religion, an external profession, and a bare performance of trifling ceremonies, and oral traditions," Christ rejected them. "The Kingdom of God, the Gospel, was taken from them," and they were entirely destroyed. There will be several illustrations between this point of the fig tree and Matthew 24 that will illustrate the coming to total destruction of the nation represented by the fig tree.

Third, all he found on this tree were leaves. The tree looked good from a distance; it looked like there was fruit on it; it would have fooled the casual observer; it looked like a healthy, fruit-bearing fruit tree except when our Lord went to it, there was none.

Fourth, because there was no fruit on it for our Lord, he cursed it.

Fifth, the tree withered up and died.

Sixth, the Lord was the one who was hungry, not his disciples. He went to the tree for his own benefit, expecting fruit for his own self.

We need to keep the points about the tree in mind because it illustrates what was going to take place—the activities, sermons and confrontations with the leaders of Israel—over the next days.

Cleansing the Temple

Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15 and Luke 19:45 all say that Christ continued to Jerusalem, and, upon entering the temple, He cleansed it again as He did at the start of His ministry. (Jn. 2:13-22.) Christ casts out the ones buying and selling, changing money and those casually walking through the temple as a shortcut. (Mk. 11:15- 18.) After cleansing the temple, he taught the people. Christ

¹ John Gill, *Online Bible*. I strongly urge the reader to check "Irenaeus Against Heresies," *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, 1.514-518. Irenaeus deals with not only the fig tree, but the parables from Mt. 21-Mt. 24.

also healed all who came to him; the healing of *the blind and the lame* irrefutably established his authority from the Father, the God of the temple, to both cleanse it and teach God's word in it. (Jn. 14:11.) Those who claimed the authority that they now saw Christ removing from them could not do what he was doing. All they could do was get an angry with him. (Mt. 21:14,15.) Luke 19:47, says that *he was teaching daily in the temple*, implying more than one day. (Luke tells us that Christ returned each evening to the mount of Olives, apparently the same place as Bethany, 21:37.)²

Greek Worshipers

Having cleansed the temple without their authority, the religious leaders were mad. Though they desired to destroy him, the crowd gathered around listening to Christ prevented them from moving at this time. Now John 12:20-50 fits in. Before returning to Bethany (or the mount of Olives) the night of the second day after he had cleansed the temple, *certain Greeks, i.e., Gentiles*, who had come to the temple for the feast asked to *see Jesus*. We know their desire was sincere, for they were in Jerusalem at the time of the feast to worship God. Up to this point, the Lord had continually refused to permit non-Jews to approach him, but now he apparently welcomes the Greeks. The Lord, vv. 32ff, tells the disciples that from the point that will shortly arrive, all men everywhere will be drawn to himself by the Spirit. The Lord's message in this passage (vv. 22-50), speaks of the very soon opening of the way of life to all nations because of the rejection by the Jews (v. 48).

In response, Jesus preaches another message, saying that the time of his glorification is at hand. His *soul is troubled* over the hardness of the Jews and their reaction of him, and over the coming destruction of the Jews, their religion and their city for their hardness of heart—he had wept over the city. His *soul is troubled* over the suffering and death he is about to endure, but *for this cause* he came to this point in his life. His voiced his desire was to glorify the heavenly Father, and the Father voiced his approval in the hearing of all present. The heavenly voice, which some attributed to an angel or to thunder, was for the benefit of the people: it left all the people, leaders included, without excuse.

He spoke of the manner of his death, *lifted up from the earth*. He spoke of *the judgment of the world* and the condemnation of the *prince of this world*:

Ver. 31. *Now is the judgment of this world, &c.*] That is, in a very short time will be the judgment either of the Jewish world, when that shall be re proved, con vincted, and con demned for their sin of re ject ing Christ, and cru ci fy ing him, by the spirit, in the min is tra tion of the Gos pel; and they still con tinu ing in their im peni tence and un belief, in pro cess of time wrath will come upon them, upon their na tion, city, and tem ple, to the ut ter most; or of the Gen tile world, when there shall be a dis crimi na tion, and sepa ra tion made in it, of the cho sen of God, who shall be called by spe cial grace, and with the con verted and be liev ing Jews, shall form a Gos pel church state, sepa rate from the world of the un godly; or of the world of God's elect among Jews and Gen tiles, whose cause, be ing un der took by Christ, he will now vin di cate it, and re deem them from sin and Sa tan, who have usurped a power and do minion over them: hence it fol lows,

now shall the prince of this world be cast out. The phrase, ..., "the prince of the world", is much used by Jew ish writ ers {d}, by whom an an gel is meant; and they seem to de sign the an gel of death, which is the devil: and it is cer tain, that he is here in tended, and is so called, not be cause he has any le gal power and au thority over the world; but be cause he has usurped a do minion over it, and has great power and ef fi cacy in the hearts of the chil dren of dis obe di ence, who yield a vol un tary sub jec tion to him, as if he was their proper lord and sov er eign: now the time was at hand, when he should be cast out of the em pire of the world he had as sumed, and out of the tem ples of the Gen tiles, and out of the hearts of God's elect among them.³

Gill verifies our conclusions:

First, the world judged was the Jewish world that rejected Christ (pictured by the cursed fig tree).

Second, when the Lord spoke at this point, Satan's usurped power and dominion over the world and its inhabitants was about to be broken by the Lord by his death and restriction.

Note 2 Corinthians 4:4:

² See "Throw the Bums Out," App A. (to be added).

³ John Gill.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which be lieve not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

But the Lord in John 12:31 identifies Satan as *the prince of this world*. Therefore, the god of v. 4 is the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth.

The Gospel Door

Christ is saying that the door of the gospel is about to be opened to all the peoples of the world, *whosoever will*. Clearly implied is that these Greeks, *i.e.*, Gentiles, who are seeking to worship the true God at the temple and who are wanting to *see Jesus* are a forerunner of what will come—the door to the kingdom of God is about to be opened to all the peoples of the world, and the Gentiles will “flood” into the kingdom. He gives the terms of admittance to the kingdom of God, and the terms have nothing to do with any physical relationship to the saints of old, nor with any kind of temple ritual. Christ is the new temple, a fact he has made abundantly clear, and will make several more times.

The request of the Greeks to see Christ brought about his message. Christ clearly spoke all these things, yet his antagonists could not understand what he was saying—they could not understand that he was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Christ’s words, his actions (miracles) and even the heavenly voice could not get through to them that he was the Promised One of the Old Testament. Christ warned many times that their rejection of himself would lead to the annihilation of their nation. Though they well understood that he spoke against them, they could not understand the truth about Christ. So for his own safety, he had to hide himself from the religious leaders. He probably retired to Bethany.

The author gives the reason that the leaders of the people could not see who Jesus was, and, accordingly, were unable to believe on him. John inserts this statement, *that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled* (v. 38, Isa. 53:1). Christ so clearly fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning himself that the blindness of the leaders had to be supernatural, *For this cause* (v. 39, Isa. 6:10, etc.). However, John also points out that many of the Jewish rulers did believe upon Christ, yet they loved the praise of men more than the glory, praise of God. (Jn. 12:40-43.) Christ continues to plead with the hardened people to believe on him. (Jn. 12:44-50.)

A short time later, after the restriction, Peter points out (Ac. 2:23) that it was the council and foreknowledge of God that prevented their belief. God prevented their believing upon Christ so his eternal purpose would be accomplished. Yet some did believe, but not enough though to change God’s eternal purpose. If enough leaders to sway the vote for Christ had believed, Christ would not have been put to death.

Election

God’s eternal purpose prevented those from believing, which would change his plan for the ages. So what about the obvious hardness of hearts to the word of God and the gospel today? Scripture is clear—God is working his eternal purpose and plan. Therefore, the salvation of souls will be done within the sovereign Tri-une God’s purpose and plan.

“Okay! So what’s the use of working so hard to reach everyone?”

Answers:

1) We are commanded to.

2) Christ did. He preached consistently to those who he knew were blinded to who and what he was.

3) Among the hardened ones (hardened by God) were ones who would believe. Therefore, we have no way of knowing who will believe and who will not.

4) We also have Pe ter's ex am ple, as well as Ste phen's and Paul's. These men con tin ued preach ing to those hard ened in their re bel lion against Christ. God kept pull ing a few at a time out of the antichrist crowd.

Though the an ti christ crowd may be as hard as it was in Christ's day, we must con tinue on do ing all we can to reach and teach them for God's glory. We can be as sured that af ter we have done our very best for him, stand ing firm upon his word, that his eter nal pur pose is be ing ac com plished, even in and through the antichrist crowd.

Jesus cleansed the tem ple of the ir re lig ious, and preached a power ful and plead ing ser mon (Jn. 20:44-50.) He then re turned to Beth any for the even ing.

Chapter IV

Day three

Christ re turns to Je ru sa lem, his dis ci ples see the tree with ered, Christ teaches on faith, and he very point edly con fronts the Jew ish re lig ious lead ers, *the chief priests and the elders of the peo ple* (i.e., San hedrin), *the builders*.

Mark 11:19ff, Mat thew 21:19- 22, Christ de parts on the even ing of the day he cleansed the tem ple, the day he preached the mes sage when the Greeks came to him. He re turns the next morn ing (the third day), and the dis ci ples see the tree that the Lord spoke to the pre vi ous morn ing—it is to tally with ered away. When Pe ter com ments on it, the Lord uses it as a teach ing ex am ple on prayer: *all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, be liev ing that ye have re ceived them, and ye shall have them*, Mark 11:24 (Mt. 21:19-22. We also should look for and even make oppor tu nities to teach about prayer.)

Mat thew 21:23ff (Mk. 11:27ff, Lk. 20:1ff)

They en ter into the tem ple again, and Christ con tin ues teach ing. Re member, the pre vi ous day Christ had cleansed out the tem ple of its rob bers and thieves. In do ing so, Christ claimed author ity from the God of the tem ple to do such a thing, he claimed author ity over the tem ple, which was at that time iden ti fied as the house of God. When Christ cleansed the tem ple, he also claimed the author ity to judge—that is, to pass judg ment on what was tak ing place in the “house of God” and in the hearts of the peo ple. He called them thieves and rob bers. The peo ple knew what was go ing on with these mer chants, for they were be ones be ing robbed. They loved what he did, and their sup port pre vented the lead ers from forc ing Christ to quit his heal ing and teach ing.

Christ's author ity to do these things in the tem ple is chal lenged by the rul ers of the Is ra elite na tion, *the chief priests and the elders of the peo ple*: They de mand of him, *By what author ity doest thou these things? and who gave thee this author ity?*

Observe:

First, those in power have al ways done eve ry thing within their power at every op por tu nity to dis grace Christ be fore the peo ple, to un der mine his mes sage and win them away from Christ the Saviour.

Sec ond, the ques tion, “Who gave you the author ity to do what you have done and are do ing here in the tem ple?” is the same ques tion asked of Pe ter, “Who gave you author ity to teach here in the tem ple?” (Ac. 4.) They might as well have added to their ques tion, “We didn't give the author ity; there fore, you had and have no author ity.”

Third, the answer: “Where did John get his authority to baptize? You didn’t give it to him, so who did? God or man (the religious leaders or Rome)?” These men were not about to answer him because they knew if they said, “From men,” the people would stone them. They knew if they said, “From God,” then Jesus would say, “Why did you not believe him?” They took the safe way out, and said, “We don’t know” (Mt. 21:23-27, Lk. 20:1-8). Christ said, “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Actually, he had many times already made it clear by what authority he taught and acted, e.g., John 12:20-50. (Cf., Jn. 9:27.) So, obviously, they intended to use the answer they were sure he would give, “My Father in Heaven,” to accuse him of blasphemy before the people, but our Lord turned it on them.

The Parables

The Two Sons, Mat thew 21:28ff

Christ continues to confront the wicked religious leaders, this time with a parable of a man with two sons. He concludes parable by telling the religious leaders that the worse of sinners would enter the kingdom before they would, for they refused to realize their sinful condition and repent despite Christ’s mighty works.

Following Mat thew’s account, we are told that a man had two sons, both of whom he told to go work in the vineyard. One had the outward formality of obedience (the leaves on the tree), saying, “Okay Dad, I’ll do it.” However, inwardly he was disobedient—he did not do *the will of his father*. (See *The Biblical Examiner*, “The New Pharisees.”) Contrariwise, the other son first said, “No, Dad I won’t do it.” However, inwardly he repented of his disobedient spirit—he did *the will of his father*.

Note the contrast, which had already been made for the disciples. Referring back to the fig tree, the Lord of the vineyard sought fruit from a tree that looked good, yet he found none. There was no fruit on the tree that looked like it should have had fruit.

Jesus then pins them down: “The publicans (sinners) and harlots are better than you, for they had no appearance of fruit (obedience). Yet they repented, and became fruit-bearers at John’s preaching of repentance. Whereas you have all of the outward signs of a fruitful tree, yet you refused to believe John’s preaching. Therefore, the ones who said ‘no’ yet repented and obeyed, are better than you who said ‘yes’ yet disobey. You reject the one John preached to you about.”

The Vineyard, Matthew 21:33ff

Our Lord does not stop. Remember the fig tree! All of his messages this third day in the temple fit within the illustration of the fig tree from the day before. The illustration for his parables is the fig tree, which was cursed for having no fruit on it even though it looked fruitful—it withered away to nothing.

He continues to speak specifically to the chief priests, scribes, elders (rulers and leaders of the Hebrew nation), moving right on to another parable, “Listen to me” (v. 33). Continuing, he says, *A certain householder...* (Doing all he could for his vineyard to keep it alive, he planted it, and hedged it about for protection from its enemies. He also prepared a place to receive the fruit from it.

Isaiah 5:1ff, clearly tells us that this vineyard was the congregation of the Lord or the Old Testament Jewish Church:

In this parable *a certain householder* did all that could be done for his *vineyard*: it was well *planted*, and *hedged round about*, provided with a *wine-press* *digged* in the rock, and guarded by a *tower* built for the purpose. Even so the Jewish Church had been created, trained, guarded, and fully furnished by the Lord: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant” (Isaiah v. 7). Every thing was in good order for the production of fruit, so that the Lord was able to say, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah v. 4.)

The owner *went into a far coun try*, and com mit ted the es tateto*husbandmen*, who were to take care of it for him, and yield to him a cer tain share of the pro duce as the rent. Thus the great Lord of Is rael left the na tion un der the care of priests, and kings, and men of learn ing, who should have cul ti vated this heri tage of Je ho vah for him, and yielded up to him the fruit of this choice vine yard. God for a while seemed gone from his cho sen peo ple, for mir a cles had ceased; but this should have made the scribes and priests the more watch ful, even as good ser vants are the more awake to guard the es tate of their mas ter when he is away.⁴

The Lord cre ated, trained, guarded and fully equipped it to bring praise to Him self, Isa. 5:4-7. The *householder* let out the vine yard (turned it over to the care of oth ers), and went into a far coun try. The men were to take care of the vine yard (his heri tage) while he was gone; they were to cul ti vate and protect it. Then upon his return, they were to give his por tion to him.

The Old Tes ta ment con gre ga tion of the Lord (OT Is rael) was left in the care of priests, kings and men of learn ing. For a time, God seemed to have de parted from Is rael. Though the own er's ab sence should have caused these men to be even more watch ful and faith ful over his es tate, it did not. Rather, they be came very lax, and failed to give the *householder* his just due (ob serve the par ables of our Lord in Mt. 25).

V. 34, the *householder* left his vine yard in the care of the *husbandmen* un til the time when he could ex pect the vine yard to bear fruit. The lead ers of the na tion (the *husbandmen*) were not giv ing to their owner (the Lord) his just honor, love nor serv ice, his le giti mate *inheritance*. Rather, these *husbandmen* did all they could to re tain it, the *inheritance*, for them selves. There fore, the *householder* sent his *servants*—the prophets—to the na tion with his mes sage to give unto the *householder*, the Lord of Glory, his due. The proph ets of old con tin ually called the na tion to re pen tance.

V. 35, his *servants* de liv ered the warn ings to give the *householder* what he longed to him (e.g., Ps. 80, Isa. 5, Jer. 2, 19, Ho. 4). How ever, the lead ers of the peo ple, de sir ing to keep the vineyard (Lord's heri tage) and its fruit to them selves, not only re jected the warn ings, but they killed the mes sen gers (see Mt. 23:34- 37, Heb. 11:36- 38). The re lig ious lead ers of the na tion re sisted every ef fort by the ser vants of God to call his peo ple back to the Lord, and ren der obe di ent serv ice to the *householder* ac cord ing to his law. The *husbandmen* en joyed the fruits for them selves by keep ing the peo ple in ter ri ble bond age. (Cf. Lk. 11:37ff.)

V. 36, the *householder*, be ing an ex cep tion ally pa tient man, sent more ser vants to plead with them to return and submit to the *householder*. No doubt the *householder* thought, "Surely, if I warn them enough, they will listen, re pent and turn back." But no! they con tin ued to re ject the mes sen gers.

Note: Those at tempt ing to over throw God not only will re fuse to lis ten to rea son, but will per se cute and kill those who try to rea son with them. Not only does the un godly crowd to day de sire to rebel against God and take what is right fully his, but they will per se cute and even kill his mes sen gers who try to call the "vineyard" back to its owner—unjust stewards will not tolerate any at tempt to call into Scrip tural account their ac tions against the *householder*

There is an other in ter est ing point here that con tin ually ap pears through out Scrip ture. It ap pears sev eral times in this short con fron ta tion with these un just Jew ish lead ers—v. 33, *And let it out to husbandmen*. Ro mans 13:1—God or dained the pow ers that be; God is the one who placed the wicked hus band men in the po si tion of author ity over his heri tage. The rea son he placed them in author ity was to pro tect the vine yard and to ren der to the him the fruit, the honor and glory. God placed the authori ties, re lig ious and civil, here, and the authori ties did not do right.

When they did not do right, God sent his proph ets to warn both the lead ers and the peo ple. Not only did the lead ers re ject the warn ing (they loved their place of author ity, book of Zeph.), but the peo ple loved to be with out the law of God, so they could fol low af ter their own lusts (book of Hos. See Jer. 5:31).

God warned both the hus band man (the re lig ious and civil rul ers) and the vine yard (the peo ple) to re pent, or he would de stroy them. Both re fused to heed his warn ing, so not only did he hold the

⁴ Spurgeon, MATTHEW, 184.

leaders responsible for refusing *to glorify God as God* (Rom. 1:21), but He also held the people responsible for refusing *to glorify God as God*. The people followed the leaders in their rebellion, which also moved God to bring judgment. (Jer. 15:4, Hos. 5:21; 8:4.)

Yes, the *householder* established the husband men in their places of power and authority. In their places, they rebelled against the land owner, bringing his wrath against them. The people followed the husband men in their rebellion against the *householder*, making his wrath even more terrible. (See Rom. 2.)

Illustration

A *householder* planted grapevines, setting keepers over the vines. The one who planted the vines knew what laws were required to protect the vines and for the vines to grow properly and bear good fruit. He gave these laws to the keepers, telling them what they had to do to keep the vines safe, healthy and prosperous. As the keepers departed from the laws established by the *householder*, the vines grew toward the unjust keepers. When the keepers failed to follow the laws established by the *householder* for the good of the vines, the vines went wild. Without pruning (with the Sword of the Spirit, the word of God), the vines became useless. Over a period of time, the vines became so wild and useless that all that could be done with them was cut them off and graft in new ones. However, though the unjust husband men allowed the vines to go wild, there were a few vines that remained good; there were a few (a remnant if you please) that continued to bear fruit—they welcomed the *householder* with his fruit, and they were praised by the *householder*.

Thus we see that just because *husbandmen* are established by God (for all power is established by him according to his good pleasure and for our good) does not mean that the vines are to follow them. Though the husband men depart from the instructions of the *householder*, the vine still belongs to the *householder*, and is still responsible to glorify the *householder*. The vine must fear him who has the power to kill both body and soul, and the husband men do not have that power. All who refuses *to glorify God as God* will receive the just reward.

Matthew 21:33-36 was specifically spoken to the Jewish nation that Christ is confronting through its leaders. The application is as broad as all of time and space—God is God over everyone and everything. Accordingly, all who refuse *to glorify God as God* over everyone and everything will be destroyed, v. 41. Might God in his mercy see fit to give us the grace to remain faithful to himself.

Note also that the failure of the *servants* (i.e., the prophets sent by God) to bring the fruit back to the *householder* was not their fault. They were faithful to the owner even to the death of some. The fault was with the *husbandmen*. The requirement of all time is to be faithful. (1 Cor. 4:2.)

V. 37, the *householder* could have determined to punish and destroy the wicked husband men for treating his servants so mean, but he did not. Rather, he had mercy, and in that mercy, he sent *his son* to them, hoping the husband men would show respect to the son.

This was the last chance for these wicked husband men who had been given charge over the vineyard: “Surely, *they will reverence my son*, and give to him what they refused to give to the servants whom I have already sent. He is the heir to it all, so surely they will realize who he is and honor him. He cannot fail.”

V. 38, our Lord brought out into the open what was going on in the secret recesses of the heart without ever calling a name—this is preaching at its best. Notice what he said.

1) The chief priests, Pharisees and the elders of the people knew who Christ was. They knew he was the Messiah. In this exchange with them (21:23-23:39), Christ plainly told them that he knew what they were doing. They knew the way into the kingdom of heaven, yet they not only refused to enter, but they did all they could to prevent others from entering, 23:13.

2) After they saw the son and knowing who he was (*this is the heir*), they secretly counseled among themselves how to get rid of him. (See Ps. 2.) Matthew 26:3-5 records one account of their secret consulting against the son—daring not to do it openly, they did it among themselves.

3) Envy was the reason for their secret counsel—they wanted what the son had. Even Pilate realized that envy was the motive for their desire to kill the son. (Mt. 27:18.)

4) They saw his murder as their means to take what was rightfully his—they longed (lusted) after what Christ had. They saw him as a threat to their power and authority, so their goal was to get rid of the one whom all the people were following. They were willing to do anything to get the people to again follow themselves. (Jn. 12:19.)

Note: Evil men have not changed, whether inside or outside the religious community. Carnal men have only one goal and motive behind their actions, *i.e.*, “Gold, glory and gals.” Carnal men will not only compromise but boldly “sell out” our Lord for any of these things. I could not count the number of “godly” people who have departed from Scripture to follow any of these three things.

From the time of the fall of the evil one, men have been trying every means possible to cast off the *bands and cords* of his law. (Ps. 2.) And secret counsels are not new to day. The exposure of the secret counsels may be new, but the counsels have always existed. The secret counsels will continue as long as there are carnal men who walk after the desires of their own hearts. (Ja. 4:1-5. Note the *conspiracy* is evil men operating in the “name of the Lord” against the law-word of God, Jer. 11:9, Ez. 22:25.)

The Word of God, Christ, laid the secrets of the heart right out in the light for all to see. Needless to say, he had not read, “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” because his words caused serious hostility. (Mt. 21:46.)

A purpose of the word of God is to reveal and expose the secret things of the heart to the light of the Son. (Heb. 4:12. Paul made even professed Christians his enemy with the truth, which is typical of carnal men, Ga. 4:16. Moreover, the amount of offense taken over the truth shows the love for God’s word, *viz.* the more love, the less of fense, Ps. 119:165.)

Though they claimed to love God and his law, the wicked sought to put Christ to death as he exposed their evil deeds done in darkness. They sought to do away with the one whom they saw as a threat to their power and position. Men have not changed: 1) The carnal will be overcome with the truth; 2) those with the wrong motive will stand against anyone or anything threatening to their positions; and 3) there will be persecution (even to the point of death) of all kinds against those who not only reveal secret wicked devices, but who counter them with the word of God. (Mk. 13:13, Lk. 21:17, Jn. 15:18-27, 17:14.)

John 15 is a very powerful passage along this line, especially vv. 18-20. Our Lord makes it clear that his message delivered for use by his servants will cause hatred from the world toward his servants. Observe: The “gospel” (death, burial, resurrection, justification) does not cause hatred; rather, hatred is stirred when the truth of God’s word is used to expose sin. (Jn. 15:24, 25.) The hatred is not because his followers have done wrong or said the wrong thing; the hatred is from his followers doing the right thing and speaking the truth in the face of the departure from God’s law-word, apostasy. Hatred is excited when the word of God is used to call sin sin. (1 Jn. 3:4.)

When the word of God exposes the secret, hidden things of the heart, it will get the same response Christ received. Why do the ones involved in sin hate the righteous without a cause? Because their deeds (or hearts) are evil—they hate any one or anything that might expose their evil.

Attempting to retain their hold on sin and on the people, these evil men made their secret plans to get the Truth away from them.

V. 39, speaking as a prophet, our Lord clearly tells these men what they are going to do, and they did it. They caught him in the garden of Gethsemane; they cast him out in their council in the hall of Caiaphas; they led him out of the city of Jerusalem, and they slew Him at Calvary. They slew the heir, resulting in their swift judgment less than a generation (*i.e.*, 40 years) later.

No tice: Not only does he tell them what they are going to do, but he tells them what they have done in private. Evidently, it has not occurred to them at this point that he is clearly exposing the thoughts and intents of their hearts before the multitudes.

V. 40, he puts the question straight to them. In stead of caring for the vineyard, the *husbandmen* usurped the vineyard; they then mistreated and abused every messenger the *householder* sent to them. Finally, they killed the only son of the owner, hoping to seize the inheritance. Christ then asks, *When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?*

Evidently, our Lord seems to have caught them off guard. They may have been so intent on catching a wrong word from him that they were not really paying any attention to what he was saying. Vv. 23-27, they sought to trap our Lord with words, but he reverses the trap—the hunters became the hunted. They saw the first trap (John the Baptist, v. 27), and avoided it. But now the experts at words are caught in the trap of words. Men may make their best attempts to make Christ (Christianity) look foolish, but they will be caught in their own vain attempts. Therefore, they speak right up with the answer in v. 41, *He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.* Out of their own mouths they condemn themselves.

Three points to notice from v. 41:

First, **they** called the husbandmen *wicked men*. They could not avoid this answer, for the parable was clear and plain. The word of God always causes fallen man to condemn himself, convicting of sin. (Jn. 16:8.)

Second, **they** call for the destruction of the *husbandmen* by the *householder*. Any person in his right mind would do as they said this *householder* would do. The *householder* had been abundantly patient with these *husbandmen*, sending a many *servants* to them. In fact, the average man would have moved against these wicked men at the first or second abuse of a servant. The Lord's parable clearly gave the land owner the right to move against the wicked men. As the facts were presented to the hearers, it was so clear that even they had to admit it was justice to destroy the wicked men. (The application seems to be hid from them at this time.)

The justly deserved destruction called for in this parable came with their utter destruction when the God of heaven visited Jerusalem. He sent his army (Rome, the most powerful army of the day) in the terrible avenging of the blood of His righteous servants and of his son. (See 23:34-39.)

Third, the *householder* will take the vineyard from the wicked men, and *will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which will render him the fruits in their seasons.* The facts again are so obvious that even these wicked men had to agree the *householder* is right.

Note that our Lord boiled down well over four thousand years of history into just seven verses (from Abel to Christ), which, no doubt, kept the application hidden. We are so used to time restrictions that it is very difficult for us to grasp something like the Lord did. Here our Lord used thousands of years as though it were but a few days. We seem to feel that if an event does not happen within a few days, it will not happen at all. Worse yet, if we do not see promised results almost immediately, we have a hard time getting excited over the promises found in God's word.

On the other hand, the devils crowd gets very excited over plans reaching hundreds of years into the future. They will joyfully invest unlimited money, time and energy in something they know will not bring results for hundreds of years. Christians see nothing but failure to invest in the kingdom of God while the pagans see nothing but success to invest in the kingdom of men. Seemingly, the average Christian just can not see past his or her own generation or maybe the children's. God help us to see past our life time. (See "The Death of Victory," by Pastor Need.) Christian shortsightedness is costing us the world, and is bringing sure judgment against unfaithful stewardship.

Note again the answer by the wicked in v. 41: Back in v. 25, they were able to reason out their answer concerning John, avoiding the trap; yet here they rushed headlong into the trap. Obviously, their eyes were blinded.

Now the second part of the answer in v. 41: *Let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him fruit in their season.* The Lord's vineyard passed from these wicked men to men who would be faithful in their trust—it passed from these religious leaders to the Apostles and on to the Gospel Church.

Mat thew 13:11 (Mk. 4:11, Isa 29:10) points out that Jesus spoke in parables in order that the wicked husbandmen could not understand, resulting in the kingdom being transferred to the Apostles, and then to the Gospel Church. Mat thew 5 describes the laws governing the kingdom of God, and those abiding by those laws are the keepers and heirs of this kingdom. The Jewish religious rulers sure were contrary to the laws of God's kingdom (*see also*, Jn. 3).

We are told of the transfer of God's kingdom from Old Testament Israel to the New Testament Israel of God (Gal. 6:16. *See Israel's Identity/Israel's Conversion* by this author) in a great many other passages, e.g.,

Mat thew 8:12 talks about the children of the kingdom being cast out because they rejected the Son; they were to be replaced by those who receive the Son. The kingdom (vineyard) is given to those who will return the praise, honor and glory back to the *householder*. *The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness...*, speaking speaking of the religious (as well as civil) leaders of the people of God (Jewish nation) who absolutely refused Him. (Mt. 21:41.)

St. Peter and the Keys

Mat thew 16:19, Christ gives to Peter *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*: The keys being, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*—the salvation profession. (The Gentile version is Rom. 10:9-15.) The *keys* can be defined thusly:

A metaphor taken from stewards who carry the keys: and here is set forth the power of the ministers of the word, as Isa 22:22 says, and that power is common to all ministers, as # Mt 18:18 says, and therefore the ministry of the gospel may rightly be called the key of the kingdom of heaven.

They are bound whose sins are retained; heaven is shut against them, because they do not receive Christ by faith: on the other hand, how happy are they to whom heaven is open, who embrace Christ and are delivered by him, and become fellow heirs with him! (Geneva, *Online Bible*.)

The Keys of the kingdom (taskleidasbasileias). Here again we have the figure of a building with keys to open from the outside. The question is raised at once if Jesus does not here mean the same thing by "kingdom" that he did by "church" in verse 18. In Re 1:18; 3:7 Christ the Risen Lord has "the keys of death and of Hades." He has also "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" which he here hands over to Peter as "gate keeper" or "steward" (*oikonomos*) provided we do not understand it as a special and peculiar prerogative belonging to Peter. The same power here given to Peter belongs to every disciple of Jesus in all the ages. Advocates of papal supremacy insist on the primacy of Peter here and the power of Peter to pass on this supposed sovereignty to others. But this is all quite beside the mark. We shall soon see the disciples actually disputing again (Mt 18:1) as to which of them is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven as they will again (20:21) and even on the night before Christ's death. Clearly neither Peter nor the rest understood Jesus to say here that Peter was to have supreme authority. What is added shows that Peter held the keys precisely as every preacher and teacher does. To "bind" (*dēsēis*) in rabbinical language is to forbid, to "loose" (*lusēis*) is to permit. Peter would be like a rabbi who passes on many points. Rabbis of the school of Hillel "loosed" many things that the school of Shammai "bound." The teaching of Jesus is the standard for Peter and for all preachers of Christ. Note the future perfect indicative (*estadedemenon, estaillelumenon*), a state of completion. All this assumes, of course, that Peter's use of the keys will be in accord with the teaching and mind of Christ. The binding and loosing is repeated by Jesus to all the disciples (18:18). Later after the Resurrection Christ will use this same language to all the disciples (Joh 20:23), showing that it was not a special prerogative of Peter. He is simply first among equals, *primus in ter pares*, because on this occasion he was spokesman for the faith of all. It is a violent leap in logic to claim power to forgive sins, to pronounce absolution, by reason of the technical rabbinical language that Jesus employed about binding and loosing. Every preacher uses the keys of the kingdom when he proclaims the terms of salvation in Christ. The proclamation of these terms when accepted by faith in Christ has the sanction and approval of God the Father. The more personal we make these great words the nearer we come to the mind of Christ. The more ecclesiastical we make them the further we drift away from him.⁵

5 Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*.

The *keys of the kingdom* are thus held by every Chris tian—it is the gos pel mes sage. The un saved are “locked out” of the king dom with out the gos pel mes sage. (1 Cor. 1:21.)

Peter’s profession is the only way into *the kingdom of heaven*, and the Jewish leaders, as a whole, absolutely refused to enter. How ever, many did en ter on an in di vid ual ba sis. The leaders knew the way; they knew he was the son. (Mt. 21:38, 23:13.) Rather than mak ing the way clear to the peo ple to en able them to en ter into the king dom, they did their best to pre vent oth ers from en tering. They knew the key, but “beat oth ers back” from us ing it.

Paul points out, *Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have cru ci fied the Lord of glory*(1 Cor. 2:8). *The princes of this world*, us ing all of their worldly wisdom, sought to slay the son and seize the inheri tance. God brought all of their wisdom to nought, exalting the Son through the resurrec tion, and thus making him the heir of all things. (Heb. 1:2.)

A Mystery

Paul tells us that the wicked *husbandmen* thought that mur der ing the son would se cure their po si tion and give them the vine yard (king dom). But the Fa ther used the mur der of the son to se cure the on’s heir ship of the vine yard (king dom). If the princes of this world had know this mys tery, that the mur der of the Son would se cure the in heri tance, they would not have done it. But it was hid den from them. Though this method of se cur ing the in heri tance was planned from be fore the foun da tion of the world, it was kept a mys tery, so it would be ac com plished.

Murder, Death and Victory

The *husbandmen* were to tally con vinced that his mur der would solve their prob lem and se cure the in heri tance (the praise, hon our and glory due to the Lord God) for them selves. This is why they fought the res ur rec tion so hard—all the way from pay ing the guards to lie about the res ur rec tion to per se cut ing the early church as it taught the res ur rec tion. (See Ac. 5:27-33.)

The Mes si ah’s death was called for many time (e.g., Ps 22, Isa. 53), but the resurrec tion was well hid den; understanding it required supernatural enlighten ment. (Lk. 24:44, 45.) Thus the Jew ish na tion missed it, and lost the king dom. They did not ex pect the Mes siah to have to die and be raised from the dead in or der to claim His in heri tance (king dom).

The gos pel is not just the death of Christ for sin ners. The world will read ily agree to (and en cour age) the death of Christ as long as it goes no fur ther. The Church of Rome loves the doc trine of the death of Christ, keeping him on the cross, *i.e.*, the Crucifix. The anti-Christ socialists (e.g., Com mu nists) will even en cour age the preach ing of the death of Christ.

The Resurrection

How ever, the res ur rec tion is where jus ti fi ca tion takes place. (Rom. 4:25.) With out the res ur rec tion (the risen Christ), we are of all men most miser able. (1 Cor. 15:19.) The sav ing power of Christ is con firmed in the res ur rec tion. *He was cut off out of the land of the liv ing: for the trans gres sions of my peo ple was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked*, but with out the res ur rec tion, there can be no sal va tion nor for give ness of sins. It is Christ’s vic tory over death and the grave that pro vides his peo ple’s vic tory over sin. (See Rev. 1:18.)

His heirship is based not only in his creation of all things, but also in his resurrec tion. (Ac. 5:31.) He was exalted to the right hand of the Maj esty on High from the grave. (Eph. 1:20- 23.) His pre-eminence is based in his resurrec tion. (Col. 1:18.) Our hope of vic tory in this world over the world and the spirit of an ti christ (1 Jn. 4 and 5) is founded in his res ur rec tion. (Eph. 2:1-6; Col. 3:1-3.) In fact, every ounce of hope we have, whether in this world or in the world to come is found in the res ur rec tion. The res ur rec tion and the power of it for his peo ple was a mys tery to the Old Testamentsaints.

Un doubt edly, the ne ces sity of Christ's death and res ur rec tion is as "sense less" to the wisdom of this world as any thing can be—power over death through death! Power over all the things of this life through death! There would be no greater mys tery to the natu ral man. The most fool ish thing ever in vented would be the doc trine of power and vic tory through what would seem to be the ul ti mate de feat, death. (1 Cor. 1:27-2:16.)

Paul tells us that had the wicked men known the fact of the res ur rec tion, they would not have *killed the Lord of glory*. This ba sic doc trine re mained a mys tery, hid den from them, so they killed him. Moreo ver, this gos pel is hid den from the un saved man. The pay ment for sin se cured through the res ur rec tion must be re vealed to the natu ral man by the power of the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor.4:1-6.)

Though Christ's fol low ers knew what had hap pened in his death and bur ial, the ne ces sity and pur pose of the res ur rec tion was be yond their grasp un til he opened their un der stand ing of it. (Lk. 24.)

Death and Victory

This ba sic doc trine of life, power and hope in death re mains hid den to the natu ral man to day: 1) power through the death, bur ial and res ur rec tion for sal va tion, and 2) power to live above (vic to ri ous over) the things of this world. (Col. 2:20; 3:3. We are not left dead in Col. 3:3, but Paul takes us on—by faith, we *reckon our selves dead* to the things of the flesh, do ing in stead the things pleas ing in his sight.)

Power and vic tory through the ul ti mate de feat, death? How fool ish to the natu ral man! Power and vic tory, peace and joy through death to our own de sires? Noth ing will cre ate scorn in the heart of the natu ral man quicker than this doc trine of death. Yet here alone does the vic tory lie for God's peo ple. The ul ti mate fool ish ness to the world brings the ul ti mate vic tory to the peo ple of God—a mys tery if there ever was one. (See Mt. 16:24, etc.)

To these wicked hus band men, death to the son would solve their prob lem. Yet death to the son only as sured to them the very worse and ul ti mate judg ment against them. Is it any won der that the mes sage of the res ur rec tion caused such hos til ity? It was the preach ing of the res ur rec tion that grieved these wicked lead ers, caus ing them to lay hold on those who preached it. (Ac. 4:1-2; 5:28.)

Let us add that the mys tery of vic tory through Christ's death and res ur rec tion seems to be a well- hid den mys tery even to day; a vast ma jor ity of Chris tians see only de feat ahead. 1 John 4:3, 4, as well as 1 John 5:4 has been re moved from the Bib li cal the ology of most Chris tians—rather than visu al iz ing vic tory re sult ing from death to self, we see a death to the vi sion of the prom ised vic tory. (To me, there is no doubt that this is a re sult of Dar by's in flu ence. Vic tory through death in Christ to sin and self is the only means of vic tory over all things, Gal. 2:20; Ph. 4:13. See my book, *The Death of Victory*.)

Our en emy has been quite suc cess ful at mak ing the vic tory which is ours through death a mys tery, hid ing it from God's peo ple. We cer tainly need the Holy Spirit to show us: 1) The ne ces sity of death to self, our de sires, motives, goals, etc; 2) The nec es sity of iden tify ing with the death of Christ, and 3) the need for His grace to work in us that we might walk in His vic tory over the world, flesh and the devil. (2 Cor. 4:1-6.)

To those who claim the power of the res ur rec tion, there can be only vic tory in Christ Je sus our Lord (God's word defines vic tory).

Mat thew 16:19

Our Lord "gave" the keys (plu ral) to God's king dom to Pe ter. An other key given to the apos tles which was hid den from the lead ers (from whom the king dom [vineyard] was being re moved) is found in v. 18—it would be upon this profes sion that **Christ** would **build** His church.

The religious lead ers prided them selves in being the build ers (as we will see), and Christ's claim that he would be the builder was part of re mov ing the king dom from them.

Mat thew 16 ef fec tively took the vine yard from the wicked hus band men, giv ing it to an other group of hus band men who would give the fruits to the *householder* in due season.

Mat thew 18:3, (Jn. 3) gives the for mula for en ter ing into God's king dom (vine yard). This for mula is also re peated many times through out Scrip ture. It re quires re pen tance (turn ing from our way) and faith in the Lord Je sus Christ, *i.e.*, trust ing in his pay ment for our sins as well as sub mit ting to his author ity over every area of thought and ac tion. The lead ers re fused to do these things; there fore, the vine yard went to those who would do them. An ab so lute re quire ment was/is hu mil ity.

John 18:36 shows us an other ma jor point that "locked" the Jew ish lead ers out of the king dom, *viz.* Their lust for physical power and authority. The king dom (vine yard) was/is spiri tual; there fore, those de sir ing physical power and author ity re fused the King, thereby re fus ing the king dom.

Before returning to Matthew 21:41, we should cover another point from the parable of the vine yard. Though men tioned else where, it is good to be re minded of Psalms 2. We are there told that evil men who do not want to be bound by God's laws (obe di ence of which brings glory to him as man ad mits his ways are not right and that God's ways are) have al ways at tempted to throw the Son out—they have al ways at tempted to seize the in heri tance. Of course, Nim rod was a good ex ample, though it goes back to Adam.

Since Adam, man's ba sic in stinct is to act in de pend ent of God. Only the grace of God through Christ can re store a proper at ti tude to ward the land owner.

Accordingly, as we look around us, we see the total dedication to remove all evidence of the *householder*; the one who made the whole thing). Yet we are as sured that their ef forts against God, his laws and his peo ple will not suc ceed. We know from Scrip ture as well as from past his tory, that the *householder* will judge all wicked men who at tempt to throw out the son (heir to all things), so they can seize the vine yard. Scrip ture clearly speaks: the vines who yield their fruit to these wicked men will be judged also. They are a wild vine (un saved), or they have been de luded to fol low false teachers.

As already mentioned, those willingly walking after the ways of the wicked leaders will be judged with the lead ers; those who do not lift their voice in pro test will be trod den un der foot with the wicked. No doubt, they also will be up rooted (judged) when the *house holder* comes against the wicked hus band men. (Jer. 15:4, Hos. 5:11.) On the other hand, we have the ones in the vine yard who have at tempted to re main faith ful—these will have praise from the house holder.

Though these pas sages from Mat thew chap ters 20- 24 were ful filled (as we will see), the prin ciples con tained therein are as per ma nent as the word of God it self.

Matthew 21:41

The facts were so ob vi ous that these wicked men who Christ was ad dress ing pro nounced their own sentence. In Luke's words:

He shall come and de stroy these hus band men, and shall give the vine yard to oth ers. And when they heard it, they said, God for bid (Lk. 20:16).

Gill com ments thusly:

He shall come and de stroy these hus band men, &c.] Which had its ac com plish ment at the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem: ac cord ing to the other evan gel ists, these words are the an swer of the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, to the above ques tions put to them by Christ, af ter he had de liv ered the par able; but here they seem to be the words of Christ, who also said the same, and con firmed what they had ob served, and could not but own, that it was just and right, and what might be ex pected, with what fol lows:

and shall give the vine yard to oth ers; the land of Ju dea to the Ro mans in par ticu lar, and the church state, with the Gos pel and or di nances of it, to the Gen tiles in gen eral, some times called "oth ers"; see Gill on "Lu 5:29" and see Gill on "Lu 18:11".

and when they heard it, they said, *God for bid*; though they were their own words, yet repeated and confirmed by Christ, and perceiving that they were the persons intended, deprecate the fulfillment of them; at least so far as they understood they related to the killing of the Messiah, and to the destruction of their nation, city, and temple.⁶

The *householder* did return and destroyed the wicked, as promised in Matthew 24. Matthew 21:41, *which shall render him the fruits in their seasons*. This refers to returning all of the glory for everything done back to the householder:

The hall-mark of a faithful minister is his giving to God all the glory of any work that he is enabled to do. That which does not magnify the Lord will not bless men.⁷

Returning of all the praise, honor and glory to the one who made it all possible is a work of God's sovereign grace, for though it is required of him, the natural man has no desire to return all to God. (Phil. 3.)

How much is being done for God today through the worldly wisdom and human personality of a leader and how much is being done through his Spirit, only the Lord knows. Notice John 15: Godly fruit can be borne only through complete dependence upon him, yet it is quite obvious that great and huge "works" can be built without him. Observe the many "large" works that are accomplished by many who openly deny Christ, e.g., reportedly, 1/4 of the world is Moslem.

The natural man not only will keep the praise, honor and glory for himself, but he will do many marvelous works so he can receive the praise, honor and glory. Many times (most of the time), only the individual knows his true motive, unless the individual espouses openly false doctrine. Then it is obvious for all who will examine the Scriptures to see.

Might we also add that many times people can be as sincere as a heart at tack and still be as wrong as the devil himself. They may truly believe in their hearts they are returning the fruit to the householder, yet the facts can be well hidden from them. This is why we have the word of God and passages such as Philippians 3:15 and Hebrews 4:12.⁸

Chapter V

The Builders

The Jewish religious leaders in Christ's time consisted of *the chief priests, the elders* (Sanhedrin), *the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees* and the *Herodians*. (Mt. 21:23, 22:16, 23, 45, Lk. 20:1, 19, 20, 27, etc.) [The *Herodians* were "Those who with Herod made a new religion, composed of both heathen and Jewish religion." Geneva. "A Jewish political party who sympathized with #Mr 3:6 12:13 Mt 22:16 #Lu 20:20 the Herodian rulers in their general policy of government, and in the social customs which they introduced from Rome. They were at one with the Sadducees in holding the duty of submission to Rome, and of supporting the Herods on the throne. (Comp.) #Mr 8:15 Mt 16:6." Online Bible.] The religious leaders of the Old Testament nation of God considered themselves *the builders* of that nation.

These religious leaders prided themselves in their self-professed office as *the builders* of God's kingdom on earth—a literal kingdom made up of men and women who represented God in the world (national Israel in the Old Testament). They were confident that everything done in the name of the Old Testament God of Israel had to be done under their authority. (Mt. 21:23, 42.) The consistent attitude as God's "official" *builders* of his kingdom is easily traced throughout the New Testament, especially the book of Acts. The Judaizers continually attacked Paul's authority and teaching; every one of Paul's letters deal with the evil efforts to get new Christians to support and return to Judaism. In *the builders'* opinion, they were the people, and no one could lay a brick in

⁶ John Gill, *Online Bible*.

⁷ CHS.

⁸ See *The Other Jesus*, by this pastor.

God's kingdom without their authority (approval). Their attitude prevailed until the destruction of the Jewish nation and religion in 70 AD, foretold by Christ in Matthew 24. No doubt one reason for destroying the old nation led by *the builders* was that if not destroyed, the Judaizers would have seriously infected the new church.

Peter, the Keys and the Builders

In fulfillment of Christ's promise to Peter (Mt. 16:19), Peter was the first to use the *keys*. He "unlocked" the kingdom of God for the Jews, including the religious leaders who put Christ to death. (Ac. 2.) Being in the same location, Jerusalem, and shortly after Christ's crucifixion, it is safe to say that a great many present were among those who took part in the crucifixion. It is also safe to say that there were many present who were also at the Matthew 21 exchange with the religious leaders, including some of *the builders*. Peter told the Old Testament house of Israel, including some of its *builders*, that the one they *crucified* is now on high as *both Lord and Christ*. He is now the judge of all the earth, v. 36. The door to the kingdom was unlocked, and many of Old Testament Israel flooded in, v. 41. Following the preaching of the gospel in the book of Acts and the tremendous response to it, it is worthy of notice that the gospel message always included the enthronement of Christ as the presently seated Lord and judge of the whole earth and all that is in it.

Over five thousand became believers when Peter preached the death, burial, resurrection and enthronement of Christ over all things. His message caused deep grief among the Jewish religious leaders, *the builders*. When he was hauled before the same men whom Christ had confronted, *i.e.*, the religious leaders or builders, Peter used Christ's words of Matthew 21:42, 43 to preach the same message Christ had preached to them only a short time previously, Acts chapter 4.

Christ and the Builders

In Matthew 21, Christ quotes the Old Testament. (Ps. 118:22, 23, Isa. 28:16.) With these powerful passages, Christ looks the religious leaders, the builders, right in the eye, and asks them, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner:"

No-tice some interesting points from Christ's statement:

First, Christ said that the one whom these self-proclaimed builders reject will be the head of the corner (corner stone—the stone upon which the rest of the building is built upon). Christ tells these men that the son thrown out and killed by the wicked husbandmen will be the one with whom they will have to deal.

Second, Christ said that every thing will be built upon the one they reject. Their desire (and any attempt) to build apart from him is not only doomed to utter failure, but everything built apart from him will be judged. (Mt. 7:24-29, 21:44, Heb. 12:27-29.)

A Marvelous Work

Third, Christ said that both the building the kingdom of God and the judgment against its enemies will be the Lord's doing. The wicked men of this world can (and will) exert every possible human effort within their power to prevent *the Lord's doing*, but they must fail. Because of their tremendous efforts to do away with the son and to prevent his claiming his inheritance, the kingdom work of the Lord will continue uninterrupted. Its success despite the best efforts of men and devils will be *marvelous in our eyes*, v. 42.

His sufferings, death, resurrection and glorification are indeed marvelous—all that relates to Christ is marvelous. His *marvelous* work goes much further than just his work on Calvary and his ascension to the right hand of power on high. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1:12.)

The kingdom builders to day are doing all that is within their power to overthrow the Son, so they can build apart from him. They have a tremendous hatred against the Son. If the Son were

visibility alive today, they would find some trumped-up charges and murder him again. Though they loudly proclaim they are against capital punishment, if he were here, they would surely change their belief. The freedoms sought by the anti-christ crowd is their freedom to carry their anti-god activities without fear of punishment.

However, Christ points out to these builders who desire to build apart from him (his law-word) that all their efforts will fail. Not only will they fail, but the wicked builders of our day will be judged. The kingdoms of this world that are in rebellion *against the LORD, and against his anointed*, and against his kingdom will fail. Their best efforts that all their money and power can produce will fail. The kingdom of God will prevail, and it will be marvelous in our eyes.

God's Kingdom Prevails

How can the kingdom of God prevail in the face of tremendous odds? The answer is beyond human comprehension; we can only say that it *will be marvelous in our eyes*. Daniel 2:44 tells us that the stone cut out without hands destroys the kingdoms of men, grinding them to dust. The kingdoms the builders who have built apart from the Son will fall; they will be crushed by the stone, and it *will be marvelous in our eyes*. It will be obvious that their destruction is the Lord's doing.

We can only speculate how the Lord will bring to nought all the wisdom of the world that is gathered together against him. However, the clear implication in 1 Corinthians chapters 1 and 2 is that the kingdoms will be subdued by the gospel, the power of God working through the Spirit of Grace. Yet the work can not be apart from judgment against sin. (See Ps. 45.) Will the wrath of God against sin cause men to turn to Him? Whatever means he sees fit to use to overturn the wicked builders will be marvelous in our eyes.

The Lord continues, telling these builders that the work of God (Kingdom) is going to be taken from them and given to another nation who will do all for the glory of God, v. 43. They rejected the gospel, refused to spread the gospel (build the kingdom), or let anyone else into the kingdom. Therefore, they would lose the honor of spreading the gospel. (In fact, it had already been given to the apostles, Mt. 16:13-20.)

Note: Though the hope of advancing the kingdom of God was removed from the Jewish nation, they have not abandoned that hope. They still look forward to the day when the Messiah will setup his throne in their "nation," and build the kingdom through them. Many of God's people encourage them in that hope. We also notice that many of God's people support the old nation of Israel above the new *Israel of God*. If those supporters perceive a threat to the old Jewish hope of a nation and a Messiah to rule the world, there is a very loud cry, and money pours in to support the hope that Christ removed in this confrontation with the Jewish leaders.

This is obviously another tactic of the enemy (*the builders*) in his attempt to overthrow the kingdom of God. If he can keep the world's attention on a kingdom of fallen men, then he can do his best to war against the true kingdom of God. He will fail, and his failure will be marvelous in our eyes. That is a glorious day to look forward to—the day when all of the wicked plans of wicked men will be allowed to come out into the open, and then the Lord will overturn them as though they were nothing. He will dash them all in pieces like a potter's vessel falls under a rod of iron.

Are we today seeing the Lord allow the nations to gather together for their "best shot" at him before he dashes them to pieces? (Zechariah 3:8-20 presents an interesting thought along this line. See the Examiner, "The Gathering of the Nations".)

We know this for sure: whatever our Lord sees fit to do, whatever he has planned for the rebellious against his kingdom (law-word), however he sees best to do it, it will be *the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes*.

No notice, moreover, that our Lord spoke as though it had already taken place. The overturning of the nations who have gathered, are gathering and will gather together against him is as sure as though it had already taken place. In fact, in God's eyes, it has already taken place.

In Acts 4, Pe ter speaks in the same tone of voice—his faith in God's word gave him tre men dous con fi dence as he stood against the un godly pow ers. His words should also give us tre men dous con fi dence as we stand against the wicked who de sire to over throw God. We know that even though they might tri umph for a sea son, in God's eyes, they are al ready over thrown. We will see that over throw; maybe not on this side of death but we will see it.

While man who love God sup port the na tion of men, the new na tion (v. 43) is ig nored. The new na tion is the church, the new Is rael of God. It is made up of both "Jews" and "Gen tiles," hav ing a com mon united goal to ren der him the fruits in their sea son, to do all for the glory of God, to submit all to him, and to ac knowl edge his author ity and su pe ri or ity in all thing.

God's New Nation

Pe ter iden ti fies the church as this new na tion. The church is called to be faith ful stew ards. (1 Cor. 4:2.) As the church faith fully ren ders the fruits to the house holder, it will be blessed. (1 Cor. 1:29- 31. See 1 Cor. 3:6, 7.) The Epistles abound with parallel verses to what Christ tells these wicked "builders". (See *Israel's Identity/Israel's Conversion*.)

Pe ter sums up the teach ing in 1 Pe ter 2:1-10: The king dom of God is re moved from the Jew ish lead ers and given to the church, with the apos tles as the first "build ers." (1 Cor. 3:10.) Christ is the foun da tion, and through the writ ten word of God, preach ing and the power of the Holy Spirit, the build ing is built upon Christ.

Both Christ and Pe ter spoke to men who prided them selves in be ing the build ers. Be cause of un be lief, they are re moved and re placed with the 12 apos tles. (Mt. 21, Ac. 4. See also 2 Cor. 5, Eph. 2:21, Heb. 9:11, 3:4, 11:10, etc.)

Take and Give

Another point men tioned by Christ: *Taken from you and given to* another na tion. Spur geon comments:

"What a warn ing is this to our own coun try! We, too, are see ing the sac ri fice and de ity of ou r Lord ques tioned, and his sa cred word as sailed by those who should have been its ad vo cates. Un less there is a speedy amend ment, the Lord may take away the can dle stick out of its place, and find an other race which will prove more faith ful to him and to his gos pel than our own has."⁹

Ap par ently, our Lord did ac cord ing to Spur geon's warn ing, as Eng land grew cold, hard and in differ ent. It seems as though he gave the can dle stick to Amer ica for a time, but it is just as ap par ent that he is now re mov ing it from Amer ica.

I read that Eng land enacted leg is la tion to make her state edu ca tion "dis tinctly Chris tian in char ac ter. [Chal cedon Re port, No. 280, Nov. 88.] Such ac tion would be in ma jor op po si tion of the trend we see in Amer ica where a large per cent age claim to be "Chris tians." [See R. J. Rush doony, *The Mess ian ic Char ac ter of Amer i can Edu ca tion*.] We send mis sion ar ies to Eng land, while it ap pears they need to send mis sion ar ies here to teach our "Chris tians" the im por tance edu ca tion "dis tinctly Chris tian in char ac ter."

God is no re spec ter of per sons nor na tions. He will re move his can dle stick from un faith ful na tions, leav ing them in dark ness and at the mercy of the pow ers of dark ness. We need to be plead ing with our God that his Spirit of grace will work again in the hearts of Amer i cans, and es pe cially that he will open the eyes of those who are *called by his name*.

Christ, the Stone

Mat thew 21:24, *The stone which the build ers re jected, the same is be come the head of the cor ner...* The re lig ious lead ers Christ is speak ing to, *i.e., the build ers*, re jected Christ, *the stone*. *They caught him, and cast him out of the vine yard, and slew him*. The re sult of his hu mil ity and obe di

⁹ Spurgeon, *Matthew*, 187.

ence to *the death of the cross* was that *God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Je sus, every knee should bow and every tongue should con fess that Je sus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Fa ther.* (Phil. 2:8-10.)

In the presence of a large multitude, Christ ex poses the evil mo tives and wicked ways of *the builders*. The lead ers of the na tion *per ceived that he spake of them, and they sought to lay hands on him* to kill him. Because *they fearde the multitude*, they were unable to do it at this time. (Mt. 21:46.) There fore, they sought for a time when the mul ti tude would not be pres ent, and Ju das led them to that time.

In the pres ents of the mul ti tude, Christ tells *the builders* that the stone (Christ) they re jected (killed) will be placed as the cor ner stone; he will be made the very foun da tion of the en tire king dom of God by the Fa ther. (Mt. 21:44.)

Fourth, Christ said that the na tion which cast out and re jected the stone (at its lead ers urg ing) will be judged and cast off (mis era bly de stroyed). The privi lege of rep re sent ing the king dom of God on earth will be taken from them and given to another nation (the church) which will give the proper glory to its King.

Fifth, Christ said that the stone they worked so hard to do away with will be the stone which they will have to deal with. In Spur geon's words,

Those who stum ble over Christ, the chief cor ner stone of the church, are in jured: they suf fer grievous bruising and break ing, but he re mains un hurt. Op po si tion to Je sus is in jury to our selves. These upon whom he falls in wrath are ground to pow der; for the re sults of his anger are over pow er ing, fatal, ir re triev able. Op pose him, and you suffer; but when he ar ises in his might, and op poses you, de struc tion has al ready come to you.¹⁰

Stone of Stumbling

Christ's refer ence to *The stone which the builders re jected* clearly re ferred to *the stone* of Dan iel 2. The stone crushed the im age of a man, and ground it into pow der to be scat tered by the winds of heaven. These lead ers, *i.e., builders*, stum bled over Christ—they could not ac cept the fact that the prom ised Mes siah was a hum ble man who claimed to be the long ex pected king of God's king dom. (See Isa. 8:14, 1 Pet. 2:7, 8.)

The builders' pre con ceived no tions of a glo ri ous, lit eral king, as was David and Solo mon, and a glorified tempo ral Jewish king dom, as ex isted un der David and Solo mon, caused them to re ject Christ. (Cf. Mt. 12:42, Lk. 11:31.) They sought, and suc ceeded, to kill him be cause be ing a man, he made him self equal with God. This hum ble, poor man could not pos si bly be the prom ised, glo ri ous king, so they stum bled, and fell over his hu man ity. Though they *stumbled*, there fall was not per ma nent—it was through their stum bling that the gos pel went to the Gen tiles. How ever, the king dom was not closed to them, for they could/can enter in the same way as did/do the Gen tiles, through faith in Christ. (Rom. chaps. 9-11.)

It is in ter est ing that though Christ re ferred to him self as the Son of Man, no apos tle ever made such a refer ence. When Christ spoke of his fu ture com ing judg ment against the king doms of men, the hear ers just could not com pre hend his words com ing from such a meek and lowly per son. (Mt. 20:28. See also, Mt. 10:23, 16:27, 28, 19:28, 24:30, 25:31, 26:64.) Christ warned his peo ple not to stum ble at his hu mil ity, for it did not pre vent his be ing the Son of God. Rather, it was in per fect and com plete har mony with the Old Tes ta ment prophe cies, es pe cially Dan iel's. Be ing the hum ble Son of Man did not and will not hinder his reign as the Glor ious King.

When the lowly Je sus ascended to the right hand of the Fa ther, his hu mil ity was no longer a stum bling block, and mul ti tudes en tered the king dom. (Ac. 2.) Yet while here dwell ing among men, his ap pear ance spoke power fully against him. In fact, as we see from Pe ter's con fes sion, his ap pear ance was so strong against his di vin ity that only the Spirit of the Fa ther could re veal the truth be hind his ap pear ance—he was the Son of God. (Mt. 16:16, 17.) (This fact is un imag inable to the

¹⁰ [Spurgeon, *Matthew*, 187.]

hu man mind—the Ev er last ing Fa ther and God of all crea tion be came flesh, so hum ble that it took a su per natu ral act of the Spirit of God to see part his hu man ap pear ance.)

Only re mem ber ing Christ as a hum ble ser vant was one rea son for the hard ness of those who called Pe ter into ques tion. (Ac. 4:6.) Pe ter now claims that the hum ble ser vant is risen from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high with all power in heaven and earth given to him. The very idea was so ab surd that early on they felt the mes sage was really no threat to them. They were sure that the new gos pel preach ers were only de ceiv ing the poor masses of ig no rant people. However, soon realizing the power of the gospel of the risen Christ to strip them of their power, they sought to stop it. They used every means at their dis posal: physi cal threats, e.g., Saul’s ef forts against the new church, and false teach ings to get the new Chris tians to sup port and re join the Jew’s re ligion at Je ru sa lem’s tem ple. The ef forts of the en e my of the Chris tian Gos pel have changed very little.¹¹

Mat thew 21:44, when the Lord spoke of *the stone* grind ing the wicked *to powder*, *the builders* clearly un der stood his con dem na tion of them. Know ing the book of Dan iel and its prophe cies, they had to make the con nec tion be tween *the stone* Christ spoke of and Dan iel’s stone. Nev er the less, they ob served the hum ble, poor man be fore them, and thought, “This can not be that stone if Dan iel.” Yet Christ plainly tells them, “You will stum ble and fall over me (*the stone*). But the day will come when the stone will fall on you, and you will be ground to pow der.” He did re turn just as he promised *Caiaphas the high priest* and the rest of *the builders*. And he re turned in their life time. (Mt. 26:57 ff.) Re turning *in the clouds* of judg ment, he did in deed *grind him to powder*.

Observe: Fallen men are gathering to gether and mak ing their plans (as they did in Christ’s day) to over throw him and his king dom on earth. How ever, they are doomed to fail ure, for God pro tects his elect and brings them through the fire for his praise, honour and glory. (1 Pet. 1:7.)

Mat thew 21:45.

Christ, God with us, is most ef fec tive teacher who ever lived. He gave an il lus tra tion, ap plied Scripture to that il lus tra tion and those to whom he spoke knew ex actly what he said. The truth seems to have been hidden to them up to this point, but now they know. The masters of words (Phari sees and law yers, *the builders*) are now caught in their words, as the wis dom of this world is brought to less than noth ing by the word of God.

No tice that it is not pos si ble for man to de ceive the word of God nor avoid it—the word strikes, leav ing only three op tions: 1) act on it; 2) ig nore it, or 3) fight (stand) against it. These men took the latter

Cowards

These great lead ers are cow ards. Mat thew 21:46, tells us that fear ing the peo ple, they avoid t he truth. V. 46, tells us that fear ing the peo ple, they with hold their evil de sires against Christ. Though Christ laid bare their se cret plans for his death (v. 38), they pro ceed any way. The “elite” have al ways, as a whole, stood against Christ. (1 Cor. 1:26.) On the other hand, the com mon peo ple gladly heard him. (Mt. 12:37.) No doubt, they enjoyed hear ing some one who could not be in timi dated by these lead ers, some one who spoke the truth to them, and “put them in their place.” They were likely tired of be ing bul lied by these men, and re joiced in some one these men could not bully. The com mon peo ple pre vented the proud “elite” from get ting rid of Christ at this time. (How ever, we know that it was not yet time for his de liv er ance into the hands of the wicked.)

Spurgeon makes an interesting comment here:

It was ar ranged, in the or der of provi dence, that ec cle si as ti cal mal ice should be held in check by popu lar feel ing. This was an in stance of the way in which full of ten the earth has helped the woman (Rev. 12:16), and the will of the masses has screened the ser vants of God from priestly cru elty. He who rules all things sets in mo tion a high or der of poli tics in the af fairs of men in ref er ence to his church... One way or an other, Je ho vah knows how to pre serve his

11 See “Daniel’s Image & Stone,” App. B.

Son, and all those who are with him, until the hour come when by their deaths they can glorify his name, and enter into glory themselves.¹²

Spurgeon points out that the earth opening and swallowing the flood in the Revelation is a picture of the masses (in this case, v. 46) preventing the intentions of evil men from being fulfilled against his people—this would include any and every means whereby evil intentions against his people and kingdom are stopped. God uses even the unsaved to accomplish his divine purpose. In other words, *the earth* did not literally *opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth*. The words picture God using the things of nature, including unsaved men, to defend his people and advance his cause.

There are many evil men with many evil desires against the people of God. We see a total warfare, an all out effort in every area of life and thought by evil men to openly change public opinion, so they can carry out their evil desires. We know from Scripture that there are many secret councils going on to plan the best way to overthrow God. Regardless, we are assured by the word of God that nothing will happen apart from God's permission. This pastor has also found it true—in times of need, I have found the unsaved at times even more willing to help stand against the ungodly intentions of wicked men than those who are called by his name.

The ones who stand the strongest against Christ and the message of his word are those who might perceive a threat to their power and control over people. We see here the stand against Christ here was by the religious leaders, those who claimed to love God. They are the ones who pressured the civil government of Rome into putting Christ away from them. We are, accordingly, presented with two things to consider: First, the fighting and anger among “Christian leaders” is obviously over the fear of losing power and control over people, *i.e.*, one sees a threat to his power over people from another, so he strikes out and attempts to destroy the other.

Second, one wonders who is behind the scenes, applying the pressure to do away with all evidence of Christ in society today? From what we gather, those behind the scenes with tremendous power and financial backing to bring that pressure are followers of the Jew's religion. [Gal. 1:14. See *Identifying Identity*, by this pastor.]

Chapter VI

Matthew 22

The Invitation Rejected

Our Lord is preparing his disciples for his suffering and death at the hands of *the builders* and, ultimately, his resurrection, which he has been doing from Matthew 16:21. As he draws closer to the point of his death, his parables become more pointed. Not only is he teaching his disciples, he is also telling them of the soon coming judgment against those who will put him to death. Christ has used exceptionally strong words, and *the builders* know *that he spake of them*. 21:45. Christ is speaking publicly, which does not help matters any with *the builders*. All of his words here lay the foundation for his words in Matthew 24.

We are following our Lord's final days before his death. We started with day one: Christ's “triumphal entry” on colt, weeping over city and healing in the temple. The second day: Christ curses the tree, cleanses the temple, teaches the great multitude and the Greeks ask to see Christ. Matthew 22 takes place on the third day.

The third day is the day that Christ returned to Jerusalem, the disciples saw the tree withered, and Christ went to the temple where he taught on faith, and confronted *the builders* with the truth.

¹² Spurgeon, *Matthew*, 187.

Matthew 22 continues Christ's very pointed confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders, *the builders*. The conclusion of his message, Matthew 24, takes place on this day. As we mentioned at the first, the time line for the final events leading to the Lord's concluding words in Matthew 24 can be confusing, but the exact timing of the events is not the purpose of this study. [As previously mentioned, I am using A.T. Robertson's, *A Harmony of the Gospels*. His time line may not be right, but the purpose of this study is not to correct him, nor establish the proper time line. The purpose is to establish the context of our Lord's words in Mt. 24—that he is speaking of the then sooncoming destruction of Judea and Jerusalem.]

Christ's Authority

The temple at Jerusalem up to the time Christ was identified as the house of God. (See Jn. 4:21.) Entering into the temple on the third day, Christ continued teaching as he had been doing on the second day. The previous day, Christ had cleansed the temple. In doing so, Christ claimed authority from the God of the temple to judge—he passed judgment upon the activities in the temple, identifying the thieves and robbers. The people knew what was going on with these merchants, for they were being robbed. They loved what Christ did to the thieves and oppressors, and their support prevented the leaders from forcing Christ to quit his healing and teaching. Christ's teaching apart from the Jews authority also claimed authority over the temple to teach the truth from the God of the temple; it said he was directly from God the Father, and was answerable to no man. Though *the builders* understood the implications of what he was doing and saying, *i.e.*, he was directly from God, they could not accept it.

The Lord's third day is a very busy day, and we have a detailed account of what he said and did.

As we look at chapter 22, notice what our Lord did. These who hated him desired to kill him, and he knew it. His reply to those who desired to silence him was to continue on with what the Father had given him to do, even in the face of sure death. He allowed nothing to turn him aside.

Thus we see that the only answer we have for those who would oppose us, and there will be opposition, as we try to do the Father's will, is simply continue in his will. Observe: 1) Though our Lord warned us that even our own household would rise in opposition, we have a misguided idea that if we are doing the Father's will, others will rejoice in our dedication to the task (Mt. 10:34-39); and 2) let us be careful in comparing our opposition with the opposition Christ received, although he did assure us that we would receive opposition (2 Tim. 3:12)—our Lord was perfect, not leaving one area "uncovered." He met every opportunity successfully. He was perfectly balanced in every area of life at all times; he did not allow one area to suffer at the expense of another, as we do.

Accordingly, many times our "opposition" is justified, for we leave many areas undone. (Mt. 23:23, Lk. 11:42.) Thus we are justly criticized in the undone areas. Though we might have an area of life under control to the Father and above criticism, does not mean we are above criticism in other areas. No doubt Christ's perfection helped motivate anger against him. Our Lord did not back down nor compromise in confronting these proud religious leaders. He answered the opposition (in all of its hatred against him) with another parable (this is not the same parable recorded in Lk. 14:16-24), Matthew 22:

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bid den to the wedding: and they would not come. (Mt. 22:2, 3.)

Spurgeon's comments thusly:

The gospel is a glorious festival in honour of that wondrous marriage, by which God and man are made one. It was a grand event; and grandly did the king propose to celebrate it by a wedding feast of grace.¹³

Through the miracle of the virgin birth, God and man are joined together, married. His beloved Son is united with humanity that he might redeem his people from the just penalty of their sins. (See Isa. 53.)

The oriental custom was to send a first invitation, and then follow it with a second invitation to those who responded favorably to the first. Here we see that the king sent his servants to call those who were already invited, *bidden*, to the wedding.

It is quite obvious that our Lord is referring to the Jewish nation—over the many previous years, it had been *bidden* to this wedding, which was now ready in Christ. The many prophets and teachers had invited them over and over to the glorious event that was now upon them. What a marvelous privilege to be invited, *bidden*, to the king's son's wedding. The Son of the Great King is now here—the Redeemer, the Mediator, the Saviour, the Messiah, Emanuel, *i.e.*, God is now with us. Isaiah 9:6 is now fulfilled, and the message goes out again: “Come, ye sons of Israel. Rejoice that the Son is here. The appointed event that all of the servants of the kings have *bidden* you unto has arrived. *All things are ready: come unto the marriage.*”

Vv. 5ff. gives the response: “They would not come.” As Spurgeon points out: “It is not said, ‘They could not come,’ but, ‘They would not come.’” Thought they had many excuses, the problem was basically that they rejected the king, his messengers, his son, his provision and everything about the king. Their rejection was an insult of insults to the king, for it was a great honor to receive the invitation. It was a greater honor still to attend, yet they rejected the honor, and thus rejected the king.

Comparing the Lord's parable here with his words of Matthew 23:6 (Mk. 12:39; Lk. 14:7), we see that the same men who reject the heavenly king fight over earthly kings—that is, if a human, physical king had *bidden* them, they would have fought each other for the privilege to attend.

Human nature can get extremely excited and enthused over the things of this world, *e.g.*, sports events. However, when it comes to being excited and enthused over the things of the Great King, someone almost has to beg us. This pastor has found that if there is public recognition attached to “serving” the Great King, then folks might fight over his service, although that is not service for him—that is service for self. (See Mt. 6:1ff.)

The king's invitation of Matthew 22:3 was rejected by the invited at the peril of their lives, as the Lord addresses the same ones who received the parable of the vineyard. They understood that the parable of the vineyard was against them, and *they sought to lay hands on him*. They could not do it at the time because of the crowd, so they did it at night when the multitude was absent. Matthew 22, the Son answers their desire to take him. People today refuse the invitation of the Great King either in salvation or in conversion at the risk of everything.

V. 4, restates 21:36. We are thus shown a side of the Great King that we just cannot comprehend—that is, his tremendous patience and long suffering. (See Rom. 2.) We would have dealt with the sinners at their first sign of their rebellion; we would give no man a chance to sin. If people do not do the way we think they should when we think they should, we are ready to cut them off. But the Great King is patient; then he is patient; then he is patient still. Though his patience is beyond anything we can understand, he is just, as these wicked men are about to find out. “He has made every possible allowance so that they might be left without excuse if they persisted in their refusal.” [*Ibid.*]

We will see in chapter 23 that his patience with *the builders* had lasted since the murder of Abel. But the Lord warns here that it is all coming due, and the cup of his wrath will overflow upon them. Their murder of the son will be the final filling of the cup. (See Rev. chaps 6, 16, 19, etc.) The king was keeping score, as he is today. Though the wicked plotters seem to be getting away with their plots against the king *and his anointed*, he laughs from the heavens at their futile attempts.

Observe:

First, the king *bids* them. Second, he sent messengers to remind them. And now he sends messengers to tell them, only this time, the oxen and fatlings are killed, *and all things are ready*. With this statement, our Lord looks past the present of v. 3, and looks into the future, *i.e.*, the sacrifice is

made. “All things are now ready;” ab so lute ly eve ry thing is ready—the pre pa ra tion of sal va tion for men is fully made. (Spurgeon.)

No tice who he sent to af ter the kill ing of the sac ri fice: He went back to the origi nal ones who had been bid den. First the proph ets bid them; then the son in vited them; then even af ter the son was cast out and killed, they were in vited again.

It was nec es sary that the word of God should have been spo ken to the Jews first be fore it could go to the Gen tiles. (Ac. 13:46.) Even af ter the ta ble is set with the sac ri fice for the mar riage (and the ones who were bid den killed the Son, the sac ri fice, rep re sented by the oxen and fat lings), he again in vites those who were first in vited. The gos pel was first preached at Je ru sa lem, and mul ti tudes re sponded.

V. 5, those who were bid den, Abra ham’s physi cal seed, made light of it. (See Heb. 2:3.) They counted his invitation and feast less im port ant than the things of this world. They had time for their farms and for their mer chan dise, but they had no time for the Great King, which is typi cal of car nal men to day. They have both time and money to do what they want to do—pur sue their own pleas ures and de sires, they make light of the King and His Son.

Our Lord asked Pe ter, “Si mon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? (Jn. 21:15)” This question rings through the ages: Do we love him more than the farms and merchandise of this world? There is noth ing wrong with the things of the world, and we should ex cel in them as Chris tians. But when they are allowed to inter fere in answer ing the King’s call, judg ment lies ahead. What do we love so much that it prevents our answer ing His call?

Not only did they re ject the kings in vi ta tion, but they made light of it. They counted it un im port ant to an swer the king’s in vi ta tion to his son’s wed ding, e.g., “Who cares that the king has all of these things ac complished. My desires are more im port ant.” The context of Christ’s words, clearly, was the physi cal seed of Abra ham, the Jew ish na tion that ex cised un til the Lord de stroyed it, v. 7. The book of Acts rec ords the of fer given again to the na tion, and how it re sponded to both the invitation and the messengers, i.e., the apostles. Though many individuals from the nation gladly ac cepted the in vi ta tion, the lead ers re jected the king’s in vi ta tion, kill ing the messengers, e.g., Ste phen, Acts 6:8 ff.

The Remnant

V. 6, *the remnant*... Though the ma jor ity of the old He brew (Jew ish) na tion con tin ued on about their busi ness af ter the mur der of the son, there was a *remnant* who worked to re tain the Old Tes ta ment method of wor ship ing God. They were *the builders* con fronted by Christ, and be fore whom Pe ter stood. (Mt. 21:42, Ac. 4:11.) No tice what *the builders (the remnant)* did— they took the ser vants who were still try ing to get them to come to the feast, *and en treated them spite fully, and slew them*. They not only ig nored the mes sage, but de tained the mes sen gers in prison, and killed them as they had the op portu nity.

We see our Lord’s words in ac tion in Acts 4. Pe ter and John had healed *a cer tain man lame from his mother’s womb*. The peo ple who saw what hap pened *were filled with won der and amaze ment, and ran to gether unto them in the porch that is called Solo mon’s*. Pe ter, see ing the great mul ti tude gath ered to gether, started preach ing the gos pel of Christ to them. Acts 3:13, 14, 17, tell us that the Is rael ite men present at this ser mon were per son ally in volved in the kill ing of *the Prince of life*. Pe ter is sues a call to these men to *repent, and be con verted*. The re lig ious lead ers of the tem ple were *grieved that they taught the peo ple, and preached through Je sus the res ur rec tion from the dead*. So *the builders laid hands on Pe ter and John, but not un til af ter about five thou sand men* of Is rael re pent ed of their sins and were con verted.

After a night locked up, Is rael’s rul ers, elders, scribes and the high priest called Pe ter and John be fore them. The rul ers, *the builders*, ques tioned them con cern ing the “in vi ta tion” they is sued to the peo ple to come to the king’s feast. Pe ter, with Holy Ghost bold ness, told them what they had

done. The rulers did not like the message at all. But because they could find nothing worthy of punishment in Peter and John, they threatened them, and let them go. However, the next time *the builders* took the king's messengers, they not only threatened them, but they beat them before they *let them go*. (Ac. 5:40.)

Our Lord's words move quickly to fulfillment with Stephen. Stephen was a servant of the king who confronted *the builders* (the religious, ruling remnant of Abraham's seed) with a detailed message of the king and his invitation. (Ac. 7, Mt. 22:6.) Because of his message of invitation to Israel to come to the king's son's marriage, this servant of the king was drawn before the supreme council of the Old Testament Israelite nation. Then before the assembly of the nation's religious leaders, he very powerfully presented the message again, only more detailed, rightly laying the blame for the son's death at the feet of *the builders*. (Ac. 7. See Mt. 10:16-42, Mk. 13:9-37—of course, these passages apply for our day.) The message of the king, delivered by his servant Stephen to the *remnant* determined to protect their position in national Israel, created such hatred that they killed the servant. The killing of this servant of the king expanded into attempts to kill all the king's servants. (Ac. 9:1-2.)

Christ or Caesar

Israel's answer to the invitation of the king to the feast he had prepared was to kill the servants who delivered the invitation. The cry of the leaders is recorded in Luke 19:14, *We will not have this man to reign over us*. However, at the same time, they were willing to have Rome (Caesar) reign over them. (Jn. 19:15.) How like men to day—they absolutely refuse to have King Jesus reign over them, but they will gladly have Caesar reign over them. Notice that God will not permit anarchy, so either the Lord Christ will reign from the inside out, or an oppressive civil government will reign from the outside in. Either man will enjoy the freedom to do right under King Jesus, or he will have terrible oppression under evil men. (1 Sam. 8.)

We must keep in mind that Christ is talking to and about *the remnant* of Old Testament national Israel. However, the application is timeless, as the Lord calls for judgment and destruction against the those who are against his reign through his law-word. All men who are against Christ and his authority over them face his judgment. We can rejoice that Christ is in total control as we see them succeeding in our day.

Matthew 22:7, follows the parable of the vineyard point for point: "In these terrible words, the siege of Jerusalem, the massacre of the people and the destruction of their capital are all described. (Spurgeon)"

The King's Armies

Josephus records this terrible destruction promised by Christ against *the builders*. What took place when the king *sent forth his armies* to destroy the *murderers* is beyond description and comprehension. Though Rome thought it was sending its armies against Jerusalem because of its rebellion against Rome, Jesus clearly tells us that Rome was only a tool in the hand of an almighty God. After sending many messengers and many warnings to this stiff-necked people, the cup of his wrath is full—God's patience is over. (Rom. 2:1-6, the day of wrath is here.)

The king *sent forth his armies*. Rome was only a tool in the hands of an almighty God, avenging the blood of all his servants from Abel to Zacharias. Christ warned them. Peter warned them, and they beat him, and finally slew him. Stephen warned them, and he was stoned. Note that the king's servants were not mistreated by Rome, but by the religious leaders of the Jewish nation. The real persecution comes from religious leaders attempting to retain their power over people.

God's use of the heathen Roman army against his people is not new. He sent Assyria against his rebellious people. (Isa. 10:5.) He sent his servant Nebuchadnezzar against his rebellious people. (Jer. 25:9.) Neither Assyria's, Babylon's nor Rome's armies were godly men—they were the wicked

of the wicked. They executed the wrath of a Righteous, Holy God against a wicked, rebellious people who bore the name as the people of God.

In Matthew chapters 21 through 24, Christ tells the people exactly what is going to happen as the result of the national rejection of God's servants, and the ultimate rejection of the Son of the Most High God. He is preparing his followers for what is about to take place.

We might note that in Matthew 21:39, the *husbandmen* were destroyed for killing the householder's son. However, in Matthew 22:7, the murderers were destroyed for killing the servants who delivered the message that *all things are ready: come unto the marriage*. Hence, we see that many who took part in killing the son repented of their sins and were converted—they were, accordingly, spared the wrath of the king. We are not here considering Romans 11:25 and the blindness sent by God so the Gentiles could be grafted in by faith. However, we will mention that the ones who were broken off (v. 17) can be grafted back in through faith in the one they rejected. A great many were grafted into the root, Christ, for the early church was largely Jewish.

Matthew 22:1-7, tells us that those who refuse to allow Christ to rule and reign over them will face the sure wrath of the Father. All of their plans and preparation will not prevent the judgment of God from coming upon them. The fearful thing is that in the three detailed records we have of God judging his people, he used ungodly nations to do it. These wicked armies committed the worse imaginable atrocities against his people. What took place with Assyria and Babylon can be read in his word; what took place with Rome can be read in secular histories such as Josephus. History proves that no nation can turn from God and his Son, rebel against God and his total word, without facing the consequences—terrible judgments. No man (saved or unsaved) can say, “We will not have king Jesus as our authority to rule over us” and avoid the wrath of almighty God upon them.

Yet we see from our Lord's words in this passage through chapter 24, those who believed his word were spared. Though they lost all material goods, they were delivered out of the judgment to rebuild a nation which would bring glory to God, which is the hope we have to day. As we see the wicked, ungodly armies of the anti-christ crowd gathering together, we have the assurance that God will preserve and protect his faithful remnant for his glory.

As we think of that terrible judgment against the Jews, we also know that nothing like that will ever happen again. (Mt. 24:22.) This does not say that the judgment against those who reject the Son's authority will not be severe, for it do doubt will be. (Heb. 10:29.) The nations who reject the Son will be destroyed, and there will be a price to pay by all who live within those nations. (Ps. 9:17.)

Chapter VII

The Invitation Accepted

Tell them which are bid den, Be hold, I have pre pared my din ner: my oxen and my fat lings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the mar riage. The wed ding is ready, but they which were bid den were not worthy (Mt. 22:4, 8).

The king prepared every thing for the marriage of his son. He sent out in vi ta tions to the people of his king dom. The in vi ta tions were re jected by the first ones to whom it went, and thus the king and his son were re jected. The mes sen gers were beaten and killed, so the king de stroyed the mur der ers. That did not change the fact that the *wed ding is now ready*. So the king sends *his ser vants into the high ways, and bids to the mar riage, as many as they can find*.

The king now turns his back on those who were bid den (the Jews) as un wor thy. Now he send his ser vants eve ry where peo ple are found with the in struc tion to in vite eve ry one. Acts 13:46-52 gives us a ful fill ment of our Lord's words. The in vi ta tion con tin ued to be pre sented to those who

were bidden and to those in *the highways*. Those who were bidden yet believed not were moved with great envy about the invitation going to the Gentiles, and they worked hard to stop it. (Ac. 14.)

Peter told *the builders* that they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. (Ac. 13:46.) They were more concerned with their material things than in their eternal well-being. Hence, the king did not judge them unworthy, they did themselves.

Mat thew 22:10, all manner of men were invited. All who would answer the call were welcome, including those who have been previously bidden. After the sacrifice was slain, every one was invited. (Compare Mt. 10:5 with Matt. 28:19, 20.) The *servants* went everywhere, encouraging people from all over the world to come *to the marriage*. Wherever people are, preachers should be there. Note, *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister* (Col. 1:23, Ac. 2:5). Thus according to the Apostle Paul, the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven.

The servants do as they are told, gathering together both good and bad into the visible church. They gathered tares as well as wheat, dross as well as gold, goats as well as sheep, fish of all kinds. Acts gives us an account of this in gathering. The *wedding was furnished with guests*, guests of all kind, rejoicing in the king and his son. The king was happy, the son glorified and the people enjoying themselves.

V. 11, the visible church is filled with all manner of guests, rejoicing in their invitation to the wedding and enjoying the good things before them. All manner of people are tolerated within the assembly, based upon their profession of faith.

The Wheat and Tares

Then the king comes, and he notices immediately that there are some missing their wedding garments. Observe:

First, the servants of the king were responsible to go to seek people out from every corner of the earth. The people were not responsible to seek out the servants.

Second, the servants were only responsible to offer the invitation to everyone they encountered as they obeyed the king; they were not responsible to determine who had the garment and who did not.

Third, the servants were also responsible to make the guests welcome at the marriage.

Fourth, there will be those that will “come into the church for gain, for honor, for fashion, or for the purpose of undermining the loyal faith of others. (Spurgeon)”

Fifth, the final determination of the guests' qualifications was the king's.

Sixth, the servants' job is to cultivate the wheat, not root up the tares. The land owner will do that when the time comes. Our job is to invite all, and the king will separate those who are his from those who are not his.

Clearly, the Lord's words of Mat thew 22:8-14 are based upon the parable of the wheat and tares in Mat thew 13:24-30. There the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest.

V. 12, the visible church is made up of all kinds of folks, both saved and unsaved, who are gathered together for the marriage feast. The king spots one who does not have on a wedding garment. Notice that the king speaks kindly to him and say, “Friend, why did you come in here without a *wedding garment*?” The *wedding garment*, of course, speaks of salvation—the righteousness of Christ applied by faith in his atoning work. No man can stand before the Great King without this garment. (Isa. 61:10; Rev. 3:18; 7:14; 16:15; 19:8.)

Observe a few things here:

First, *And he was speechless*. It would seem that the individual being confronted was caught by surprise. He should have known better, though, because every one else had on a garment while he was naked. (2 Cor. 5:3.)

Second, remember the context. Christ is confronting the Jews over their rejection of the king's son. These Jews fully expected to be in the great feast, yet they were rejecting the garment which they were required to have.

Third, the visible church is made up of both saved and unsaved. Having everything (outward actions) expected of them, so they fit right in, the unsaved fail to have the garment provided for the quest. However the king, and only the king, sees the truth, and calls them into account. He caught them by surprise.

Fourth, there are those who know they do not have a garment, yet they feel they can fool everyone by blending in well with the other guests. They might say, "I am just as good as they are." They may be right, but that is not the point. The point is, "Who has the garment." The guest did not expect to get caught. Those without the garment looked just like the ones with the garment. No one knew (and maybe not even the individual) that they did not have the garment except the king. He knew immediately and cast the person out.

Matthew 7:22-23 gives us an answer for why there will be those who are surprised in the day when they must come face to face with the King. The guest here has no answer—there is no defense for those who try to stand before the King without the righteousness of Christ. *Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Mt. 22:13), would be the most horrible words imaginable. In his **freedom**, he chose to "crash" the wedding feast without the proper garment. Now he is **bound** hand and foot, speaking of being cast into hell. Those who feel they are free to do their own thing, are actually bound by sin.

Fifth, the servants of v. 13 are not the servants of v. 8.

Sixth, there is no answer once the king appears. If the garment is not already on when the king is met, then it is too late, for only casting out awaits. Luke 16 shows us there is plenty of reasons to repent in hell, but then it is too late.

V. 14,

Many are called: the limit lies not there. We preach no restricted gospel. All who hear that gospel are called, but it does not come with power to every heart: *but few are chosen*. The result goes to show that, one way and another, the mass miss the wedding feast, and a few choice spirits find it by the choice of God's grace. These words, of course relate to the whole parable.¹⁴

Remember the context: The *bidden* (Jews) refused to come, so the servants must go out and urge every one who will listen to come, and many do. Among those that come into the visible church are unsaved, and they are cast out into eternal torment. Yet among the many who come, there are a few who have been chosen, enough to furnish the wedding in a manner pleasing to the king for his son, which is where we must leave it. (See Jn. 15:16.) Our prayer is that each one of us would be chosen. If God is dealing or has dealt with the heart, drawing to the redemptive work of Christ, then those are chosen. The servants' job is to go urge every one.

However, the clear context, 21:46 and 22:15 tells us that this parable, 22:1-14, was given to Israel's religious leaders — Christ responds to their efforts to kill him, 21:46. It tells us that the call was issued to the leaders of national Israel, who, generally, rejected the call. Though some responded, not all who responded were *chosen*, vv. 11-14. (Cf. Jn. 6:26.) Israel, however, generally rejected the call, killing the Son. Though after the resurrection many natural Hebrews, Israelites or Jews, came to Christ, the nation still stood against the Son. The result was the destruction of the nation, 70 AD. Note that the Pharisees well understood what Christ was saying — he spoke against them. (Mat. 22:15.) Thus the context requires that we understand that *many* of national Israel

were called, *but few* of that na tion were *chosen* to eter nal life. For the na tion had to re ject Christ, so the gos pel go to the whole world.

Chapter VIII

Render unto Caesar

Our Lord has spoken very strongly against *the builders* who exalted themselves. Christ ex posed their in ner most be ings; he ex posed them as false teach ers who were bring ing judg ment and wrath from God upon them selves and upon their na tion. In the next three pas sages, vv. 15- 22 (the Phari sees and Hero di ans), 23- 33 (the Sad ducees), and 34- 40 (the Phari sees, a scribe/law yer), the men he had spo ken against seek to dis credit him be fore the same mul ti tude be fore whom he has dis cred ited them. Their very best ef forts fail.

The first group is Matthew 22:15-22, the vain efforts of the Pharisees, who unite with the Hero di ans. (Note the clear ful fill ment in v. 15 of Ps. 2: they *took coun sel against the Lord and his anointed*.)

Mat thew 22:15- 22. This text con tains some of the more mis used words of our Lord. It is a much dis cussed and abused pas sage by two groups: those who teach al most un lim ited sub mis sion to civil author ity and those who teach al most to tal an ar chy.

Like all pas sages, the con text must be kept in mind when try ing to un der stand what is be ing taught. Our Lord is still involved in the con fronta tion with *the builders*, which started in 21:23. (21:42, Ac. 4:11.) *The builders* un der stood what he was say ing about them in the pres ences of the mul ti tudes. Dur ing the con fron ta tion, he had up set *the builders* so badly that they sought to lay hands on him, 21:46. In their grand de sign for them selves and for na tional Is rael, *the builders* ab so lutely re jected the true Stone. When told that Christ was the Stone, they tried to crush the Stone. The more they were con fronted with the truth, the more hos tile they be came. In chap ter 22, our Lord con tin ues his par ables about them, caus ing even more hos til ity. In their an ger, *the builders* had *sought to lay hands on him*, but fear ing the mul ti tude, they were un able to do so. Un able to phys ically take Christ because of the people, they coun sel to gether to over throw the Lord with words. (22:15, Ps. 2.) They now at tempt to turn pub lic opin ion against him in or der to re- estab lish their po si tion over the peo ple.

Ob serve: Rather than the word of God bring ing re pen tance (as he told them they were to be de stroyed for their hard ness and re bel lion against the king), they take fur ther steps to en tan gle him with his words. Sin ful men will not give up in their vain ef forts to over throw God un less God in ter venes in their hearts. (Rom. 3:10ff)

United Effort

The *chief priests, scribes and the Phari sees—the builders*—with the Hero di ans. They pool all of their wis dom for a com mon goal—dis credit the Son of God. They would have had a bet ter chance emp ty ing the ocean with a gal lon bucket than to trap the Wis dom of the Ages with the wis dom of men:

“sent out unto him their dis ci ples with the Hero di ans” What an al li ance! The Phari sees (par ti sans of strict Ju da ism and the law) and the Hero di ans (the po lit i cal time- servers of the day, whom the former hat ed cor dially), join in flat ter ing Jesus to en snare Him by the ques tion of Jew ish ti tle against the Gen tile. Would He, the Mes siah, gain say the hopes and exalted privi leges of Is rael as a na tion? If not, how es cape the charge of treason against Cae sar. Di a bol i cal craft was there, but di vine wis dom brings in the just bal ance of truth as to God and hu man author ity and the dif fi culty van ishes. It was the re bel lion of the Jews against Je ho vah which gave oc ca sion to His sub ject ing them to

their heads then lords. Were they humbled because of it, and seeking the resources of God's grace? Nay, but proud and boastful;¹⁵

V. 16, *Master, we know...* Slick words used by the best minds they had to offer, at tempting to cause the Lord to stumble. Oh, how foolish men are to think they can get around the wisdom of God. But men will make many plans just to avoid the fact of their rebellion against the word of God. V. 16 was probably said in a mocking way. Regardless, v. 16 was said to cover the true thought and intent of the heart.

V. 17, remember the context:

First, Christ is involved in a very heated discussion with the religious leaders, *the builders* of the old nation of Israel, which was to represent God's kingdom on earth. Though not independent, this nation prided itself in its independence. Actually, it had spent more time in bondage than it had in independence.

Second, this is the final confrontation with *the builders* before his arrest. It is leading to the Lord's words in Matthew 24, warning of the total destruction of the Jewish world as was known by all involved in this exchange—the multitude, the disciples and *the builders*. This confrontation will leave all concerned with absolutely no excuse for their own terrible destruction within that present generation.

Third, Christ cleansed the temple, and taught and healed the people. In doing so, he claimed the Father's authority over the temple, which represented God's kingdom on earth—he claimed to be the God of the temple and of the kingdom of God. When he taught the word of God in the temple, he claimed to be the only proper instructor of God's word as it is taught on this earth. The healing of the multitudes proved his claim of total authority from the heavenly Father over every activity of man. (Jn. 14:11.) Christ claimed the authority that *the builders* had claimed for the many years since Moses. What he had been doing during his public ministry was clearly a challenge to their authority. His actions in the temple during his final week here on earth were the most blatant challenge yet to *the builders'* perceived authority over the Father's works on earth.

Fourth, after cleansing the temple, he left for the night. Coming back the next day, *the builders* did not forget what he had done; they confronted him with, "Who, gave you the authority to do these things? We didn't." This started this very heated confrontation and very pointed parables. The whole issue was over who gave him authority to do what he did in the temple, which represented God's kingdom on earth. His actions and teaching in the temple did not make friends with those in charge of the Jewish nation, *the builders*.

Fifth, Christ gives them three parables:

a) the two sons—sinners, *publicans and harlots*, will go into the kingdom of God before them because of their hardness.

b) the vineyard—*the husbandmen (they perceived that he spoke of them)* usurped the vineyard, killed the servants, and then they killed the son. Attempting to keep the usurped vineyard for themselves, they did all these things in their rebellion and hardness against the owner. The justly deserved results was terrible judgment against them; they considered themselves the elite *builders*, yet they were in open rebellion against the authority of the owner.

c) the wedding—the king bids them many times to the marriage of his son, yet they refuse the king's pleading of fear to come to the marriage. This parable has the same ending as the previous parable—the destruction of *the builders* and their nation. Their refusal to come to the marriage was actually rebellion against their rightful king; they rejected his authority over them. Moreover, there were those who accepted the invitation, yet they were not properly attired in the garment provided by the king.

Sixth, the attempted entanglement. *The builders* are exceedingly hostile. They know he is talking about them; the multitude knows he is talking about them. The Word of God has exposed their rebellious, evil hearts, hearts hardened against the *householder*, against the *king* and against the son. They have absolutely refused to give the fruit to the *householder*, and the proper respect to the king. At this point, they will stop at nothing to stop Christ from stripping them of their power, except public perception. Then they are covering their wicked devices with smooth, deceitful words, v. 16.

V. 17, the question: *What think est thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?*

V. 18, our Lord again strips away every false cover, exposing the very thought and intent of their hearts before the on-looking world—he has exposed their hardness and rebellion against the heavenly Father, the God of the temple. Their goal is thus to *entangle him in his talk*. Their desire is to discredit him enough before the people that they can kill him. They will do anything to get him out of their midst, for he is destroying their power and authority over the people.

Christ and the Roman Coin

Vv. 20-22, our Lord answers all of their craftiness with, *Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's*. With this, he not only answered them, but caused them to marvel, leave him alone for now, and go their way (not his way).

What Happened?

Christ had been confronting *the builders* with their rebellion against the king (Jehovah God), and warning them of the terrible destruction soon to come upon them. *The builders* sought to avoid their rebellion with this trick question. Actually, they sought to get him to join with them in their rebellion against authority. They were protesting the yearly tax levied against the Jewish nation by the Roman conquerors. Needless to say, it was a very unpopular tax, for it reminded the people that they were not free; rather, they were clearly servants to the Romans. They knew if they could get Christ to say, "Pay the tax," he would also become unpopular with the multitudes; they also knew if they could get him to say, "Don't pay the tax," Rome would be down on him for insurrection. (Cf. Ac. 5:37.)

Christ called for a piece of money, a day's wages for a laboring man. As he had already done (21:40), he got these wicked men to answer their own question. They had to admit that the money belonged to Rome: "The Jewish Rabbis taught that 'If a king's coin is current in a country, then the men of the country do thereby evidence that they acknowledge him for their Lord.' (Spurgeon)" Whether they liked it or not, the coin was proof that they were Roman subjects, and Caesar was their lord. The logical conclusion, accordingly, was that they had to pay to Caesar what he demanded.

The Lord is confronting *the builders* with their hardness of heart and rebellion against the king (Jehovah God). They are doing their best to escape the public pressure he is placing on them over their rebellion. In fact, he is telling them of the destruction soon to come upon them and their nation for that rebellion, so they are trying to publicly discredit him.

So why does he confront them with a piece of Roman money with Caesar's image and superscription on it?

That Roman coin was an avoidable evidence possessed by every one as proof of the nation's rebellion against its rightful king, Jehovah God.

These men were experts in the Old Testament law. When Christ called attention to the Roman coin, he immediately reminded them of the law and the prophets: Deuteronomy 28, 1 Samuel 8, etc. The God of the temple, from whom Christ claimed authority, had been very precise: He had told Israel, *the builders*, that if they rejected him as their king, they would have a very oppressive human king over them. Christ's answer destroyed absolutely every objection they had against the oppres-

sive civil author ity of Rome, for Rome sim ply ful filled God's prom ise to them. God had prom ised what the op pres sive king would do. He would take: their sons and daugh ters for him self; their land as well as their har vest; their money in op pres sive taxa tion, and, worse of all, God prom ised that they would be no better than servants to the oppressive civil authority. God even pointed out to them that the op pressed peo ple would cry out to him from un der their op pres sors, and he would not hear them. Though *the builders* knew all of this, they still re jected Je ho vah God as their king. In do ing so, they chose ser vi tude to op pres sive men over free dom in service to Je ho vah God. There is no neutral ground: Men ei ther ac tiv ity serve the King of kings, or they serve evil men.

With the Lord's sim ple act with the coin and his ques tion, he preached a very pow er ful ser mon from the law and the proph ets. He point edly told these men that they had re jected Je ho vah God as their king, and now they were com plain ing about op pres sive ser vi tude. And God will not hear t heir complaint un til the re bel lion is dealt with.

Verse 21 tells *the builders* that be cause of their re bel lion against their right ful king, they had Ro man op pres sion. He tells them that they had no right to com plain about Rome's op pres sion be cause they had been clearly warned in the law and the proph ets. V. 21 clearly re fers back to Mat thew 21:34, 41. With this short state ment, the Lord told them: "Give to God his fruits, and God will free you from the op pres sion. In the mean time, He will not hear your cry from un der that op pres sion."

Christ's an swer caught them com pletely off guard, amaz ing them and caus ing them to mar vel. But rather than yield to the king and deal with their re bel lion, they went their way. Though know ing the an swer for the civil op pres sion and high taxa tion, con tin ued in their own way. No doubt, they con tin ued in their com plaints against the op pres sive civil author ity—it is so much eas ier to get a group to gether against op pres sion than it is to get a group to gether to re turn the fruit to the landowner.

We must be very care ful about try ing to make Mat thew 22:15- 22 stand alone, apart from its context. Christ is deal ing with re bel lion against the King of kings.

The appli ca tion is quite ob vi ous for our day. The fact can not be avoided that God's peo ple to day are choos ing ser vitude to an op pres sive tyrant over ser vitude to the King of kings. When the author ity of the Lord Je sus Christ over every area of life is ig nored, then God will raise up op pres sive men. The law- word of God can not be laid aside, ig nored nor avoided with out op pres sive men be ing exalted. It is im pos si ble to press back the dark ness of evil and op pres sive men without re- light ing the can dle of sub mis sion to the author ity of the King of kings.

All offers freedom from oppression apart from return to the total law-word of God and his author ity over eve ry thing (church, law, civil gov ern ment, the arts, sci ence, edu ca tion, social pro grams, etc.) is doomed to re sult in only more ser vi tude, as de manded by God's laws of cause and ef fect, sow ing and reap ing.

As peo ple turn to God in obe di ence to his command- words in his law and sub mit to his to tal author ity over eve ry thing, then he will give back the free dom he re moved as men de parted from him. Christ gave the an swer to op pres sion. (Mt. 22:21.) All Christ did was re mind them of what they al ready knew. Yet these men, even know ing the cause of the op pres sion, went their own way. They chose the op pres sion of and ser vi tude to an op pres sive civil author ity, rather than admit that re turn ing to the king and his son was the an swer. Fallen men would rather die in their sins than admit they cannot handle life on their own.

Accordingly, any message against oppression must be balanced with responsibility to God's law. We cannot have one (free dom from op pres sion) with the other (sub mis sion to his author ity and responsibility toward his law). Actually, as men fulfill this responsibility and submit to his author ity, God will pro vide the free dom to serve him.

The issue in v. 21 is submission to the right ful king. The issue is over authority. Sinful men had rejected the total crown rights of King Jesus, resulting in their servitude to Rome. Therefore, the only answer to servitude and freedom is submitting to the king and doing Mat thew 21:34 and 41. The reason for servitude must be dealt with, or there can be no freedom—a mes sage fallen man hates.

Those who make Mat thew 22:15- 22 say more than what it is, a call to repentance over the rebellion against God's law-word, can lead to very serious false conclusions as well as some false hopes. The overall mes sage of God's word is that true freedom is freedom to serve God and to obey his every law- word. This freedom is the only freedom that is supported and provided by the Christian God. When this freedom is mis used in order to serve the world, flesh and/or the devil, this freedom will be replaced with oppressive men and laws.

Chapter VIX

Matthew 22:23-33.

Following our Lord's final days before his death, we started with day one: Christ's "triumphal entry" on colt, weeping over city and healing in the temple. The second day: Christ curses the fig tree, cleanses the temple, teaches the great multitude and the Greeks ask to see Christ. Mat thew 22 takes place on the third day, the day Christ returned to Je ru sa lem. On their way to the temple, the disciples see the withered fig tree. Christ enters into the temple, where he continues to teach and heal the people. This third day of the Lord's activities is given to us in great detail, covering from its morning to the time of its close. On the evening of the third day (actually, the beginning of the Jewish Wednesday), he returned to Beth any. He apparently lodged in the house of *Simon the leper*, where his head was anointed with the *exceeding precious ointment*. Judas then went to betray Christ. (Mt. 21:19-26:1.)

The Jewish religious leaders, *the builders*, had challenged Christ's authority to do what he was doing in the temple. Then Christ spoke some very pointed parables against *the chief priests and the Pharisees (the builders)*, exposing the secrets of their hearts before all the people. In fact, the strongest mes sage delivered against sin anywhere in the word of God is delivered personally, face to face, to the religious leaders in the presents of the multitude by our Lord in Mat thew 23. Mat thew 24 records Christ's words as he *went out from the temple* after his extremely pointed mes sages against *the builders*. His several mes sages caused *the builders* to seek to *lay hold on him*. Their fear of the multitude prevented them from moving against him at this time. They see that their only hope of gaining the multitude to their cause is to discredit Christ with words. They make three attempts, vv. 15- 22 (the Phari sees and Hero di ans), 23- 33 (the Sad ducees), and 34- 40 (the Pharisees, a scribe/lawyer).

The failed attempt by the Phari sees and the Hero di ans did not discourage nor stop the enemies of Christ. The *sad ducees, which say that there is no resurrection*, now try to trap the Lord with their best wisdom. They fare no better than the Phari sees and the Hero di ans. We will see that when he answers this group, there will be another group rise up—we can be assured that there will always be men raised up to oppose Christ. Though his people might see victory in one area, there will soon be opposition from another.

The Sadducees

Though our Lord only points out one of the ways, the Sad ducees were contrari wise with God's word in several areas.¹⁶ They did not believe in the resur rec tion. Evi dently, they attempted to use

¹⁶ *Sadducees*: The origin of this Jewish sect cannot definitely be traced. It was probably the outcome of the influence of Grecian customs and philosophy during the period of Greek domination. The first time they are met with is in connection with John the Baptist's ministry. They

an ar gu ment with our Lord that they had used suc cess fully on oth ers—they seem to have it down pat. Though their ques tion had per plexed other men, they are now con front ing the Wis dom of God. Note: ques tions that may throw men into si lence for lack of an swers are no more than a va por to him—they might as well have asked him whether it was day or night.

Man's Er ror

V. 29, gives the an swer for man's every per plex ing ques tion: *Ye do err. We do err:* 1) in not know ing the Scrip tures (no man can know it per fectly, but he can know it enough to please God), and 2) in not know ing the power of God. The prob lem is not that the an swer is not there; rather, the prob lem is that we do not know the Scrip tures—we fail to study and search the Scrip tures, and we fail to pray and let the Holy Spirit (the power of God) reveal to us his word. (See Ja. 1:5.)

The ques tion asked by the *Sad ducees* re veals a very ba sic mal ady of man: Evi dently they had stud ied Scrip ture, but they stud ied to sup port the tra di tions they had been taught, and that they de sired to re tain, v. 24. This kind of study over looks ob vi ous truths that coun ter what they wanted to believe.

V. 32, Christ quotes Moses whom they quoted to sup port their ver sion of the truth. Their sup posed per plex ing ar gu ment was based upon er ror; their er ror was based upon a mis use of Scrip ture.

Of course, our ap plica tion is quite ap par ent. Proba bly the number one er ror of our day is in how Scrip ture is stud ied. It is not with an open mind, prayer ful for the Holy Spirit to re veal the truth to us. Rather, it is, more of ten than not, study to con firm what we want to be lieve, and/or to sup port some thing we have been taught. As dis cussed in *The Death of Victory*, Darby stud ied Scrip ture to sup port what he wanted to teach. He built a doc trine, then he searched Scrip ture to confirm what he be lieved. His study method was not new with him, nor did it die with him. It was pre va lent with the Sad ducees, and it is still very pre va lent in our day.

Personal

I men tioned in the In tro duc tion that this pres ent study was a key in my see ing the truth con cern ing Scofield ism. But be fore the truth could make a dent in my pre vi ous teach ing, I had to will fully work at lay ing aside all pre con ceived no tions about the things I had been taught. I re al ize the fol low ing is out of con text, but it is a pas sage I had to claim, so the Lord could "re teach" me from his word.

Let us there fore, as many as be per fect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be oth er wise minded, God shall re veal even this unto you (Phil. 3:15).

As is evi dent by this current essay, not only must one be willing to work at lay ing aside all teaching that does not cor respond with the total of God's word, but he must also work hard at study ing the en tire word of God if he ex pects the Spirit to re teach him. It is so easy to let others study for us. How ever, each per son will be re spon si ble be fore God for what his word says, not for what they are taught by men, even by men they might respect.

Over the years, this pas tor has found that the power of false teach ers over their fol low ers is ba si cally that the fol low ers do not know the word of God, nor are they mo ti vated to se ri ously search it out. (See Pr. chaps. 1, 2, Ps. 119.) A very great amount of false teach ing—if not all—is built upon search ing Scrip ture to sup port what one wants to be lieve. False teach ers have some very well stud ied pas sages to sup port their strange doc trines; they have their pas sages down; they know the few sup por tive pas sages in side and out. With their few very well known pas sages, they can usu ally tie

came out to him when on the banks of the Jordan, and he said to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" #Mt 3:7 The next time they are spoken of they are represented as coming to our Lord tempting him. He calls them "hypocrites" and "a wicked and adulterous generation" #Mt 16:1-4 #Mt 22:23 The only reference to them in the Gospels of Mark #Mr 12:18-27 and Luke #Lu 20:27-38 is their attempting to ridicule the doctrine of the resurrection, which they denied, as they also denied the existence of angels. They are never mentioned in John's Gospel. There were many Sadducees among the "elders" of the Sanhedrin. They seem, indeed, to have been as numerous as the Pharisees #Ac 23:6 They showed their hatred of Jesus in taking part in his condemnation #Mt 16:21 26:1-3,59 Mr 8:31 15:1 #Lu 9:22 22:66 They endeavoured to prohibit the apostles from preaching the resurrection of Christ #Ac 2:24,31, 32 4:1,2 5:17, 24-28 They were the deists or sceptics of that age. They do not appear as a separate sect after the destruction of Jerusalem." Online Bible. "Sadducees consisted largely of the upper class of the priesthood, see:- #Acts 5.17 'Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,)" *Ibid*.

their op po si tion in knots (the con fi dence of the Sad ducees im plies that they had been do ing that very thing). The rea son false teach ers can do this is be cause their op po si tion does not know the Scrip tures. If they did, the false teach ers would not be able to con fuse them, be cause their victims would be fa mil iar enough with WHOLE coun sel of God (in clud ing the con text of pas sages used), and would be able to read ily rec og nize the er rors be ing pro moted.

Example

A friend of this pas tor found some clearly un bib li cal teach ing ap peal ing, and was ac cept ing it in the name of Bib li cal doc trine. When asked about the Scrip tural soundness of the teach ing, the friend said, “I have checked the pas sages they re fer to, and I have found them all to be right.”

I then asked, “How many times have you read through the en tire word of God.”

The an swer was, “None.”

As I have tried to teach the en tire word of God in the church the Lord sent me to, I have seen fam il ies leave be cause they did not agree with what was be ing taught. In dis cuss ing the mat ters over which they could not agree, I saw two pat terns:

First, they had not read the Bible though even one time, yet they were pass ing judg ment on what was be ing taught. They had been taught one way, their mind was made up, and they were not go ing to search it out nor change.

Sec ond, though they knew Scrip ture, they were un will ing to face the truth of the Scrip ture; Scrip ture just did not sup port what ap pealed them and the way they thought things should be. So they sought out churches to con form more to their lik ing. [I am not even im ply ing that I have all the an swers. I am, how ever, say ing that not a per son who left said to me that they had searched out the Scrip tures, and that what I was pre sent ing was not ac cord ing to the to tal of God’s word.]

A reason the false teach ers study so in ten sively their false doc trine is usu ally be cause it ap peals to the flesh. The flesh might enjoy the emo tion that comes with the false doc trine, or its prom ised pros perity, glory, or might even its false promise of deliverance from trials or from very dif fi cult situa tions. On the other hand, a study of the to tal con text of pas sages will prob ably re quire death to what the flesh wants, and a submission to God’s will, something the flesh militates against.

The ob vi ous con clu sion is that those who do not study the en tire word of God are will ing can di dates for false teach ers and their false doc trines. Those who are not fa mil iar with the en tire word of God are blown about with which ever false doc trine is blow ing the hard est. We must ad mit, how ever, that many who are involved in false doctrine are there because they want to be—the false teachers are presenting doctrines appealing to the natural man, and the people have searched them out. (See Eph. 4:14, 2 Tim. 2:16-17, 4:3.)

The Lord Knew

Our Lord had no such hu man “handi cap” as pre con ceived no tions, be liev ing what he wanted to be lieve nor not know ing the en tire Scrip ture, for he was/is the Word of God. His an swer to the Sad ducees im me di ately drove them to the to tal con text of their one point, and their ar gu ment van ished as dark ness van ishes in the sun light.

Mat thew 22:29, Christ iden ti fies their prob lem—those who prided them selves of their knowl edge of Scrip ture were in er ror not know ing the Scrip tures.

Ob serve: Those who have ob tained honor in men’s eyes in the Scrip tures are as hard to con vince of their er ror as were these Sad ducees. They con sid ered them selves “the peo ple” in their at tain ment of Scrip tural knowl edge, and they were not about to ad mit er ror. When con fronted with the clear truth of Scrip ture, they ig nored it, and went their way as did the Phari sees of vv. 22, 46.

As a rule, the more men advance in the eyes of themselves and in the eyes of others, the more committed they become to their beliefs, though their beliefs are clearly unsupported by Scripture. They are not about to allow someone who is not one of them point out the truth from God's word to them. Even if one of their group should happen to see the truth of a matter, the group will accuse them of joining with the opposition. Men, such as these Sadducees, will use every excuse the enemy offers them to keep from having to admit that truth is truth.

In these confrontations with Christ, *the builders* simply shut up, and walked away, having no answers for the Word of God. But more often than not, the response found in John 9:34 is far more typical: "Who are you to teach us? We have arrived. When you arrive to the plateau where we are, or above, then we might consider what you have to say. Until then, how dare you to even think of instructing us."

The Word of God confronted them with truth, a truth they had overlooked. And they were not about to admit they had overlooked that truth, for to do so would have severe repercussions, e.g.,

Never the less among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (Jn. 12:42, 43).

First, they were fearful of losing their position in the eyes of their followers.

Second, would have to change their doctrine and their current false doctrine had been quite profitable for them.

Third, no doubt, they did not want to be disloyal to those who had taught them their false doctrine. After all, their teachers had been good, sincere men.

The attitude has surfaced many times when trying to present the facts from God's word to folks: "I'm committed in what I have been taught and what I have taught others; I am not going to change now."

When trying to confront others over the pressing issues of our day, we many times encounter a very haughty spirit—the hearer may marvel over the truth, but, in the end, they go their own way. (See Jn. 9:34, Mt. 22:22.)

Christ confronted *the builders* with the truth that they did not know the Scriptures. Then when he confronted them with the truth of the Scriptures, they ignored the truth. As they hardened their hearts in their error, they became more committed to that error. (Ja. 1:22.)

Matthew 22:30, notice that our Lord did not attempt to prove the truth of the resurrection nor of angels to those who did not believe in neither. Both of the facts of the resurrection and angels were established facts from God's word, so arguments were not the answer for unbelief. The power of God was and is the only answer for unbelief. (1 Cor. 1:17-19.)¹⁷

V. 15, the Pharisees were put to silence; v. 23, the Sadducees are dealt with. V. 34, when the Pharisees heard that he had answered every question well, another of their group questions him, a lawyer. No doubt, they rejoiced that he had defeated their enemies, the Sadducees, yet were sad that Christ triumphed again.

Vv. 35-40. Despite their setback, they did not quit. The wicked will persevere in their wickedness; the wicked will continue in their evil efforts in the face of failure repeated. On the other hand, just a few failures and the righteous are ready to give up. The righteous should be as tenacious as are the wicked.

Hearing Christ's response, the wicked do not abandon their efforts to overthrow the Lord's Anointed, as explained by Psalms 2. Notice these foolish men are attempting to overthrow the Word of God with words—how foolish! But the weapon of words against the Word of God did not stop when Christ defeated them; the wicked continue in their foolish efforts. They use ridicule, doubts, questions, etc.—their use of words against the Word of God is limited only by their vain

¹⁷ See "Faith vs. Facts," App. C.

imaginations in their efforts to undermine the word of God. They pass laws against his word; they use anger and hate when all else fails. When words fail to overturn him, as they did here, then they use as much physical action as public opinion will allow. (Of course, they only can use what the Father permits, Ps. 76:10.)

Matthew identifies the new questioner as a lawyer. Mark identifies him as a scribe. (Mk. 12:28.) This scribe, even though he is questioning our Lord in an unfriendly manner, seems to have respect for him. Mark points out that this scribe recognized that Christ had answered his enemies well—Christ answered them not from his torical nor scientific proof, but from the word of God. No doubt, Christ could have silenced his antagonists from his torical or scientific proof, but he did not.

Being a scribe, a lawyer, this man was an expert in the law of Moses, for his occupation was copying the law. He asks a question: "Master, which is the great commandment". No doubt, the Pharisees had their opinion of what should be the answer, and Sadducees had theirs'. And both had their traditions thrown in. (Our Lord confronts their traditions elsewhere.) Since Christ's answer to the previous question had silenced the Sadducees concerning two major points of disagreement between the Sadducees and Pharisees (angels, resurrection), this scribe (Pharisee) probably hoped for another victory on the side of what the Pharisees held important in the law.

However, our Lord's answer likely was not what they wanted to hear, as he quotes an Old Testament law. (Deut. 6:4.) This scribe should have known this law, especially since this passage was quoted twice daily by devout Jews. How could a wise person like this scribe think our Lord did not know this law? We could ask the same question to day—how can people who are so wise in their rebellion against God and wise in the ways of this world think that the Lord of heaven does not know what is going on?

Mark (12:32-34) gives an addition to this exchange, as the scribe compliments our Lord on his answer. Our Lord even answers this scribe back—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." This response by our Lord ended this exchange between our Lord and these wicked men. Three of their best efforts all turned on them in full view of the multitudes. The more they try to discredit Christ, the more they fail, and the multitude enjoys every minute of it.

These wicked men had been taking great advantage of the multitudes (23:1-39), and now some one is among them over whom they can not get the upper hand. The crowd loves it, and the wicked men hate it.

Observe another point from this section: The situation of "church and state" had been brought up and answered; the situation of the resurrection had been brought up and answered, and the third question dealt with whose interpretation of the scripture is better or more important. In the third situation, we see that Christ gave the sum total of all the law and prophets as the guide of every rule and action. He refused to place his stamp of approval on any one group; rather, his approval went on the total law- word of God. The group one might be long to is not what pleases the Lord; our dedication to his total law- word is what pleases him.

God's approval does not go to any one group. His approval goes to those who honor, respect and obey his law- word. It has been said that loyalty can not be to organizations; rather, it must be to principles—the principles of his total word. Allegiance belongs to the law- word of God, not to men, groups of men nor to organizations. When organizations depart from the principles of his word, we must try to influence those organizations to return to the foundations of his word. If our influence fails, then we must remove ourselves from those organizations. We must be honest with ourselves that our efforts can not hold back apostasy, and depart from the apostates.

Chapter X

Christ on the Offense

Mat thew 22:11-46. *The builders* had released their best against the Anointed One. They not only failed to “expose” him before the multitude, but helped build him up and turn the crowd against themselves. They wisely stop their efforts as things deteriorate for them.

As the enemy is silenced in their confusion, our Lord goes on the offensive: “The king now carried the war into the enemy’s county. (CHS)” What a volley! He leave them “shell-shocked,” stunned and unable to answer.

They had sought, and failed, to defeat Christ with words, and now he uses words to utterly defeat them, leaving them speechless. V. 42, “What think ye of Christ (The Messiah)? Whose son is he?” These men knew that the promised Deliverer would come from the line of David. What they either did not know or would not admit was that he would be divine as well as human. Then our Lord confronts them with this in another question: “How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?”

Christ quotes a Messianic Psalm written by David under divine inspiration. (See Mk. 12:36.) Under the Divine leading, the psalmist makes this statement: “Je ho vah God said to Adonai (his Son and our Redeemer, Saviour): After your work (on earth) is finished, sit here on my right hand in the place of honour, power, and majesty, until I make your enemies your footstool.”¹⁸

Jesus asks these “wise” men, “How do you explain this? If the Messiah was David’s Son, how was it that David, by the Holy Ghost, called him his Lord? Christ must be something more than a mere man and a good teacher or David would be speaking blasphemy. *The Son of David* is higher than the angels, for unto which of the angels did Je ho vah God say, sit here until I make thine enemies thy footstool?” (See Heb. 1:13, Ps. 110:1.)

“If the Pharisees could have denied that the Psalm had reference to the Messiah, it would have been easy for them to reply to Christ’s question; but no man was able to answer him a word. (CHS)” They had to admit it was a messianic Psalm, yet they had to avoid it because it would condemn their attitude toward Christ.

How like false teachers of our day—they easily glide with the greatest of ease over passages that they do not like, never even admitting the passages are there.

Every attempt by *the builders* to trap Christ failed. Then he turned the tables on them, asking a question that they were either unwilling or unable to answer. If they had answered it, they would have only gotten in deeper. They could not silence him with words, so their only hope is now to silence him with death.

He knows exactly what they are going to do, for he has already told them. Now they are in a corner where they must either silence him or be completely undermined and discredited in the eyes of the multitude or, a third choice, submit to him. Of course, they chose to silence him no matter what they to do to accomplish this.

¹⁸ It is interesting that Darby changed the meaning of a vast majority of the Psalms by placing them into another “Dispensation.” See *The Death of Victory*.

Chapter XI

Matthew 23

In this chap ter, the king moves boldly and com pletely into the ene my's ter ri tory. He slays the en emy on every hand with some of the strong est words that we have re corded from our Lord. He ef fectively uses the sword in the presence of the mul ti tude that had witnessed the confrontation since 21:23. With the mul ti tude's rapt at ten tion, our Lord starts this ser mon, speak ing di rectly to his an tago nists. Wast ing no words, he looks them straight in the eye, and de liv ers a mes sage to *the builders* (the wicked hus band men from ch 21) straight from Je ho vah God. What a mes sage it is! (His fol lowers had to face these same men af ter Christ re turned to heaven, as re counted by the book of Acts. Is it any won der these men were so hos tile over the mes sage of his res ur rec tion, his en throne ment, and their quickly ap proach ing judg ment?)

False Teachers

In this last mes sage of our Lord to the mul ti tudes, he warns them (and his dis ci ples) of false teachers—men who out wardly ap pear right eous to men, yet in side they are cor rupt. Their cor ruption comes out in their false teachings. Their message exalted them selves rather than the Lord, whom they professed to represent.

Mat thew 23:1-3

The job of *the builders* was to teach the law of Moses, which they did. What they taught that re flected the prin ci ples of Moses' law was to be fol lowed. How ever, a major prob lem of these teachers was the vast amount of tra di tion they added to the law, tra di tion that voided the law. From the very start of his ser mon, the Lord iden ti fies the prob lem—they teach one thing and do an other. So our Lord says, "Do as they say (as long as it con forms with the law of Moses), but don't do as they do." Thus we are given two things by our Lord that iden tify false teach ers: First, they cor rupt Moses' law, and sec ond, they preach one thing and con sis tently do some thing else.

Examples: Working for a bus dealer in the early 70s, I took some buses to a very well-known Bap tist church for use in its bus min is try. Be ing sin gle at the time, I stayed over the week end for the church serv ices. Early on that Sun day morn ing, I went to break fast at a res tau rant with the pas tor and some of his staff mem bers. At break fast, he made some very off- color jokes and lewd re marks to the wait ress. In fact, they bor dered on be ing out right dirty. It ab so lutely amazed me that such a well- known pas tor could get up and preach so hard against these very things he was do ing.

I know of an other pas tor, no doubt the most well- known of our gen era tion among Bap tist since C.H. Spur geon. Though he preaches hard against im mor al ity and for proper dis ci pline against the im moral, when his own chil dren were caught in ex tremely im moral of situa tions, he cov ered for them, so they would not have to face the re sults of their evil.

I know of an other pas tor, also the pas tor of a large Bap tist church. Some years ago, he was trav el ing in a car through an area not close to his church. Though he had an other pas tor with him, a friend of this pas tor, he stopped at a store and picked up a *Playboy*.

Ac cord ing to our Lord, the above pas tors were/are false teach ers. Though pub licly they might preach ac cord ing to Moses (and the hear ers should do it), pri vately they are wicked. Not only are our pul pits full of these kind of men, but so are our air waves. The Lord warns us to get away from those who do not live what they preach ac cord ing to the law of Moses.

Vv. 4-10.

False teachers establish standards for others (rightly so), yet they make little or no effort to personally do what they tell others to do. Nor do they make any effort to help others do what they tell them to do. I will have to admit that after going to breakfast with that preacher whom I had greatly respected, it made it difficult for me to avoid following in his steps with unclean remarks.

The false teachers bind heavy burdens on others, yet Christ's burden is light—he was perfect at all times. Christ not only gives us a perfect example, but he also gives us the power to follow his example. (Phil. 2:13.)

Our Lord looks behind the facade, and tells the world that these men do their works to be seen of others and to accomplish their own goals: *for to be seen of men*. False teachers are identified in 2 Peter 2:3—they persuade men with very good words for their own personal gain. For if they were really concerned about their relationship with a Holy God, they would live true to their words.

Our Lord continues to identify the false teachers, exposing their desires to be first and foremost.

Example: I know of great preachers of our day who will only get involved in issues if they can lead the charge. They know a cause is just, so they get another group together with exactly the same goal as the group headed up by another, but now they are the leader of the second group. These same men will get up and preach hard against pride, yet I know of nothing they are involved in where they are not the leader.

Human nature loves to be first; it is a common sin, and one into which we easily fall. The number of times our Lord warned against and taught his disciples concerning pride is quite significant. (See Mk. 12:38, Mt. 20:26, Lk. 14:10, 18:14, etc.) The sin of pride and the desire to be exalted in the eyes of men is, no doubt, one of the most dangerous sins of the human race. Only the grace of God can keep it under control.

Our Lord tells us where pride leads. It leads to titles: “Holy Father”, “Right Reverend Father in God.” But the exaltation of titles is not restricted to the Church of Rome, although it gives us good examples. How many people climb up the “educational ladder” in order to have a MS after their names, or to have DR. before their names? The social climb is as prevalent among “Bible-believing” Christians as it is among any group. The only permissible motive for education is to better equip one to be a servant of God. God deliver us from such an unholy desire as well as from men with such unholy desires: “In the Church of Christ, all titles and honors which exalt men and give occasion for pride are here for bid den. (CHS)”

Vv. 11, 12

Our Lord gives the proper order in his kingdom, and it sure is not what appeals to the world or flesh. The way up is down. Humility is being a servant to others of the kingdom of God. “But others will take advantage of me.” No doubt they will as long as sin is present. But it is the Lord who they are taking advantage of, and he remembers and rewards every man according to his every deed done in the flesh. Each person will be rewarded for taking advantage of Christ; the humble person will be rewarded for subjecting to Christ in spite of every effort to hinder him. “The way to rise is to sink self; the lower we fall in our own esteem, the higher shall we rise in our Master's estimation. (CHS. I cannot imagine what Spurgeon would say concerning the modern self-esteem gospel, ed.)”

Chapter XII

Woes to the False Teachers

Matthew 23:13-39

At the begin ning of the min is try of the Messiah- King, he preached a mes sage con tain ing 9 bless ings, ex plain ing the laws of his king dom. (Mt. 5:3-12.) Now he will pro nounce the 8 woes, or results of vio lat ing the 9 laws:

“woe unto you, scribes and Phari sees, hypo crites!” Turn ing once again to the scribes and Phari sees, the Lord of the Tem ple de nounces them in words per haps the most ter ri ble in the whole Bi ble. It is a very thun der storm of in dig na tion, with flash af ter flash of scorn, peal af ter peal of woe. It is “the bur den of the Lord,” “the wrath of the Lamb.” [#Re 6.16].

Is this at all in con sis tent with the meek ness and low li ness of His heart, the love and ten der ness of His char ac ter? Cer tainly not. Love is no love at all, un less it be ca pa ble of in dig na tion against wrong. Be sides, it is no per sonal wrongs which stir the heart of Je sus, “Who when He was re viled, re viled not again, when He suf f ered, He threat ened not”; but the wrongs these hypo crites are do ing to the poor sheep they are lead ing all astray. The oc ca sion ab so lute ly de manded a tem pest of in dig na tion. There is this fur ther to be con sid ered, that the Lord Je sus, as Re veal er of God, must dis play His jus tice as well as His mercy His wrath as well as His love.¹⁹

After the Lord iden ti fied the false teach ers, he pro nounces woes upon them in the harsh est words of his earth ly min is try. This is not a pleas ant sec tion for those who have mis used their po si tion, or call ing, to ex alt them selves in the eyes of men. They worked to re ceive for them selves the glory that was due to the Lord, *the house holder*, alone. (Note that the Lord’s wrath was against the cor rupt re lig ious lead ers, not against the cor rupt civil lead ers, though there were plenty of them.)

There are eight woes here, each cov er ing a dif fer ent topic. It is the king’s fi nal mes sage against those who hate him. As his mes sage con tin ues on, it is pow er ful and pointed to say the least. In this mes sage, the Lord con tin ues to re move from *the builders* all their good look ing cloaks. He ex poses the in ner hearts of the false teach ers. These are the fi nal woes lead ing up to the to tal de struc tion of *the builders* and their false build ing. He ends his fi nal mes sage to them with the pro nounce ment of the deso la tion of the capi tal of their re bel lious na tion.

He speaks di rectly to *the builders*, the lead ers of the Is ra el ite na tion, the Jew ish re lig ious lead ers—*the chief priests, the elders* (San hed rin), *the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees* and the *Herodians*. They were all gathered around him here in the temple in Jerusalem. He reads their hearts, and lays out the se crets found therein for eve ry one to see. The pur pose of this study is not to de velop these woes; rather, our pur pose is to es tab lish the con text of Mat thew 24. We will, there fore, only give a brief over view of the 9 woes:

The First Woe

The false teach ers know the truth con cern ing the king dom of heaven. Yet rather than tell the truth to oth ers, they use every mans pos si ble to pre vent oth ers from go ing in, in clud ing per vert ing the word of God. Our Lord had just told why they wanted to keep peo ple out of the king dom—they loved the “re spect” that they gained in men’s eyes, and God’s king dom re quired hu mil ity. There fore, rather than false teachers being stepping stones into heaven, they are stum bling blocks to keep oth ers out. They keep the truth of God’s word from peo ple to pre serve their own power.

From what I un der stand the Church of Rome knows the truth about *the cross of Christ*, but it will not preach it because of the hold they have over the people. However, Rome is not the only

¹⁹ Gibson 333, *Online Bible*. The two messages, the 9 Beatitudes and the 8 Woes have been contrasted, but that is not the purpose of this present study. However, note that there is one more blessing than there is woe.

guilty party. There are many today who refuse to tell the truth because they fear they may lose some of their power or authority—a sure sign of false teachers.

The Second Woe.

The false teachers are involved in wicked deeds, yet for a pretense, they make long prayers. They cover up their ungodliness with nice sounding words. How like folks who we know today: their actions are anything but holy, yet their words sound beautiful. We hear of folks and churches who will loudly profess at every opportunity their love of God, yet they send their money to support Christ rejecting teachers. They say that they are depending on the Lord alone for all their needs, yet they fight for government handouts. [S]*hall receive the greater damnation* implies that there are degrees of hell.

The Third Woe

The false teachers have an unholy zeal to gather followers for themselves.

Example: Over the years, we have seen people start showing an interest in “religion,” and it seems there are buzzards on a fence waiting to swoop down to carry off the young convert. Some years ago, we “won” a young couple to the Lord. As soon as a lady who lived close to them saw them start coming to church, she swooped down. She finally persuaded them to go to her “church.” After they attended with her for awhile, she lost interest in them. They now attend nowhere. Here we see that false teachers try to build on someone else’s work. This scenario is all too common.

The Fourth Woe

This time our Lord calls the false teachers, *blind guides*. They prided themselves in being the guides of the nation (God’s people), but he calls them blind. The reason they are *blind* is because they misused the teaching concerning vows to hold the people in bondage. He called the “wise men” fools for misusing God’s word. When folks lay aside the clear plan in instructions of God’s word for what they want to teach, they become even harder in their heresies.

The Fifth Woe

False teachers *strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*. They pay great attention to the small things, as well we should; however, *weightier matters of the law* are ignored. If people would pay equal attention to the small things and the large, situations would not get out of hand.

False teachers are proud of their outward observances in the little things, yet their hearts are far from right in the sight of God. In their drink, they will strain out the gnat, yet they will swallow a camel. Many times, folks will make much over some little trifle in order to get a clear conscience, so they can overlook the camel. This mark of the false teacher is his attention to details, yet his blindness toward the important matters.

The Sixth Woe

False teachers give much attention to outward cleanliness while ignoring the inner man. They are full of all manner of wickedness. V. 26, our Lord singles out one particular Pharisee. His message could not be any stronger against groups specializing in formal observances while they deny the validity of the total of God’s word.

The Seventh Woe

False teachers keep the tombs white washed—the outside looks clean, but their inside is corrupt. Our Lord told these scribes and Pharisees that they are just like the white washed tombs: Their good works are to impress others about how “spiritual” they are, yet God knows the truth. Implied here is that false teachers are not saved, *full of men’s bones*. (Eph. 2:1.)

The Eighth Woe

False teachers express great regard for the godly men of the past: “If we had been alive, we would not have killed them.” Our Lord tells them that they are the children of the ones who killed the godly men of the past, and they would have done the same thing as did their fathers.

The Lord certainly knew the hearts of men, and they have not changed. We to day hear how great men of our past were, *e.g.*, C.H. Spurgeon, yet if they were alive and preached as they once did, they would be run out of town. Is it not amazing how wise the great men of the past were when they line up with our doctrine, yet when we depart from their doctrine, they are the ones which were in error. There is a very well known *Fundamental* publication that regularly reprints Spurgeon’s sermons, yet they edit those sermons to conform to the publication’s strong dispensational, Arminian stand.

Matthew 23:32, Jesus tells them that the measure of their iniquity is almost full, and when it is full, it would bring upon them God’s terrible wrath. The final drop of iniquity would be the slaying of the Son of God. (See Rom. chap. 2.)

A Powerful Conclusion

Matthew 23:33-39

Many times to day, Christ is presented as being a “love everyone, even the devil” type of teacher. However, in this message he has personally confronted *the builders*, the unjust *husbandmen*, and he concludes his words to them with some extremely unpleasant words: *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* How many preachers do we know today that would say this to the face sinners?

Christ knows they are going to cast him out of the city and kill him, yet he still gives them a chance before their final destruction comes, v. 34. He will again send his *servants* who will urge them to come to the wedding supper. Rather than receive the king’s *servants*, they will kill them, as they did in the past. The *husbandmen* will pursue them from city to city—which they did. Thus the guilty city—Jerusalem—will be without excuse. The first church was at Jerusalem, and *the builders* not only rejected the messengers, but did every thing they could to stop the message. Saul (Paul) was an example of *the builders*’ efforts to stop the *servants* who were making known the invitation to the marriage.

That upon you may come...

The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than any thing that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God.... Verily I say unto you,... It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. (CHS)

There was an interval between Christ’s resurrection and the promised destruction. That interval permitted the gospel to be preached in this wicked city, as well as over the known world, and for God to call out his own from the destruction. (See Ac. 2:5 and Col. 1:23.)

• Matthew 23:34-39

The Perfect Preacher

Christ was the perfect preacher. Though he had preached an extremely hard sermon, he concludes it with a tearful plea. He has sought so many times to call this rebellious city to himself, yet it would not repent and give to the *householder* what was his. The whole house of the Jews with all of its “spiritual” and physical outward beauty and grandeur was going to be left desolate.

Christ’s powerful sermon is over; he had exposed the very innermost reaches of the hearts of these men; he had told them what they were doing and why; he even singled one out, and exposed

his heart. They could not help but admit that he spoke the truth. He told them of the coming results of their hardness, yet despite all they had just seen and heard, they refused to listen and believe.

Evidently, he spoke the words of vv. 34-39 in the presence of *the scribes and the Phari sees, the builders* against whom he had been speaking. These are the concluding words of the very pointed sermon he started in 23:1. The sermon of Matthew 23 is the conclusion of the events that started, actually, with on day one—Christ’s triumphal entry on colt, weeping over city, healing in the temple, followed by the cursing of the fig tree on day two. When chapter 24 is considered in its context of 23:34-39, only those who refuse to see can miss the fact that the primary teaching of chapter 24 is our Lord’s description of Jerusalem’s destruction.

Spurgeon aptly titles this section, “The King’s Farewell To His Capital.” From his “pulpit” in the temple at Jerusalem, Christ clearly spoke these words in the hearing of *the builders*, which included every one who thought they were any one in the nation of Israel. Everything Christ said in this section against his rebellious city and nation was literally fulfilled:

The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than any thing that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood... It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. There was a sufficient interval for the full proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and evangelists of the early Christian Church, and for the gathering out of those who recognized the crucified Christ as their true Messiah. Then came the awful end, which the Saviour fore saw and fore told, and the prospect of which wrung from his lips and heart the sorrowful lament that followed his prophecy of the doom awaiting his guilty capital... Nothing remained for the King but to pronounce the solemn sentence of death upon those who would not come unto him that they might have life: “*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*” The whole “house” of the Jews was left desolate when Jesus departed from them; and the temple, the holy and beautiful “house”, became a spiritual desolation when Christ finally left it. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom.²⁰

Christ’s words are so clear in this section that he left the nation, through its leaders who were present when they were spoken, without excuse when the terrible judgment came. Yet hardened in their pride and rebellion against their rightful King, they refused to hear this final warning. In the context of what was said in Matthew 23, only those who refuse to see the truth can miss what Christ said in chapter 24, and place it 2000 years into the future.

“There are none so blind as those who refuse to see.”

The builders, the Phari sees and Sadducees, with drew, no doubt in terror at the explosion of his wrath against their hardness. It is useless to further plead with his enemies. Before he leaves the temple, he has one more simple point to make for his disciples. And that is the subject of giving.

Money

He *sat down over against the treasury*, and there observed how people placed their gifts therein. He called his disciples’ attention to the fact that though the widow only gave *two mites*, she gave from her need, not from her abundance, as did the others. (Mk. 12:41-44, Lk. 21:1-4.)

It is interesting that the last words spoken by Christ in the temple concerned money—that is, giving.

Conclusion

This was the last occurrence in Christ’s public ministry, except his coming trial and crucifixion. This is his last appearance in the temple at Jerusalem. His public teaching is over, except for what he will teach at his trial and crucifixion. All that now remains is to prepare his disciples for his

²⁰ Spurgeon, *Matthew*, 210, 211.

death and resurrection, the facts and meanings of which they have, to this point, completely missed.

Chapter XIII

Matthew 24

Opening comment:

Chris tian writ ers have al ways with great rea son rep re sented *Jo se phus's His tory of the Jew ish war* as the best *commentary on this chapter*; and many have justly re marked it as a won der ful in stance of the care of Provi dence for the *Chris tian church*, the *he*, and eye- wit ness, and in these things of so great credit, should (es pe cially in such an ex traor di nary man ner) be *preserved*, to trans mit to us a col lec tion of im por tant facts, which so ex actly il lus trate this no ble proph ecy in al most every cir cum stance.²¹

One can not prop erly un der stand Mat thew 24 apart from its his tori cal con text, and *Josephus* gives an ex cel lent his tory. Though we will quote *Josephus* in the more im por tant ar eas fol low ing, we will sim ply give the lo ca tions in *Josephus* of many of the les sor points from Mat thew 24.²²

Be cause peo ple, in ten tion ally or un in ten tion ally, ignore the his tori cal con text of this chap ter, Mat thew 24 is of the most abused and mis used pas sages of our day. (Many Chris tians have been taught to ig nore the his tori cal con texts of "pro phetic" pas sages. See be low.) It will be even more abused as the year 2000 draws closer. There is a tremendous amount of prophetic speculations based on Christ's words spo ken herein, and the specu la tions will in crease and be come even more ab surd as this mil len nium draws to a close. How ever, the prog nos ti ca tors do not tell us that our cal en der is at least 3 years off. Ac cord ingly, Christ was ac tu ally born in 4 or 3 BC. Thus the sec ond mil len nium ac tu ally ended in 1996 or 1997. There is lit tle doubt that when the prog nos ti ca tions do not come to pass at the turn of the mil len nium, the prog nos ti ca tors will then add the length of Christ's life, and date the "big event," 2033 ½. (The "big event" has con tin u ally been pushed off into the fu ture as the prophe sied events do not come to pass as planed by the re lig ious "know- it- alls.")

This chap ter con tains the basic teach ings of Dis pen sa tion al ism, but to make the pas sages work in the man ner sup por tive of Dis pen sa tion al ism, the users must com pletely ig nore its con text. (The pri mary pur pose of this pres ent work was to de velop the con text of Mt. 24.) Let me open this sec tion with Rob ert son's foot note for his "Part XII," Mat thew 24 (Mk. 13:1-37, Lk. 21:5-36):

This great dis course has as its back ground the death of Christ. Fur ther on as part pun ish ment for this crime lies the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem. The ca tas tro phe is it self a sym bol of the end of the world and in one sense a com ing of Christ in power and judg ment. But Christ boldly pre dicts his own per sonal re turn to earth, though the time is not re vealed. But he does ex hort an ex pec tant at ti tude to ward the prom ises of his com ing and readi ness for his re turn which will be at an un ex pected hour. Je sus em ploys the com mon Jew ish apoca lyp tic im agery to por tray this most diffi cult sub ject. Some schol ars in sist that Je sus was him self merely a wild en thusi ast who was car ried away by the Mes si anic hopes of his peo ple, but that is a one- sided and dis tort ed view of Christ's life and ig nores the great mass of his ethi cal teach ing. It for gets also that Je sus has a world pro gram of con quest and of power. The vari ous as pects of the dis course are not kept dis tinct. Some think that the Gos pels have mis un der stood or mis rep re sented Je sus in this dis course. But we can catch the gen eral drift of the teach ing and leave alone minute de tails of time and place against which Je sus him self warned us.²³

As we look at this chap ter, let us be re minded again of some things:

First, proph ecy is dated from the time of the speaker, not from the time of the reader. In other words, this pro phetic pas sage that Christ gives is pro phetic from the time he spoke it, around 30 AD. Ac cord ingly, the events he prophe sied could take place any time af ter 30 AD. A vast ma jority of

²¹ Doddridge, *An Exposition of the Gospels*, I:267, note.

²² Every decently equipped Christian library has *Josephus*. Many publishing houses have made him available, even in inexpensive, one volume paper back. This writer uses Whiston's translation. *Josephus* is also readily available on CDROM. He is also found on the web, e.g., <http://ccel.wheaton.edu/j/josephus/JOSEPHUS.HTM>

²³ Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 173.

his words have already been fulfilled—"prophetic" passages must be understood from the time they were written, not from the time they are read.

One of the most influential "theologians" of the nineteenth century was John Nelson Darby (1800- 1882). His influence has continued through his voluminous writings and through his protégé, C.I.Scofield. Though the KJV Bible was in print during his day, he felt it needful to translate an English Bible—his translation is gaining popularity to day, as it is found on many CD's along with the KJV. Darby taught that "His tory is not necessary in order to understand proph ecy," and " His tory never explains proph ecy." By teach ing that one must ignore his tory in order to properly understand proph ecy, he cut off Chris tians from God's truth. He thus cut the prophe cies of Scripture, e.g., Daniel, Mat thew, Reve la tion, from their his torical fulfill ment, plac ing them all into the future from the time they are read rather than from the time they were written.²⁴

Comment: This writer finds it very in consistent that those who reject the his torical con text of pas sages such as Mat thew 24 and even the book of the Reve la tion, *i.e.*, the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, will look around at his tory tak ing place and say, "Proph ecy is be ing fulfilled in our day be fore our very eyes," and/or, "Watch the Jews and Je ru sa lem, and you will see proph ecy be ing fulfilled."

By re moving pas sages such as Mat thew 24 from their his torical con text, many strange, unique and un scrip tural things can be and are be ing "docu mented."

Sec ond, the words of Christ re corded here must be read and un der stood in their Scrip tural con text. We rightly condemn others for using Scripture pas sages apart from their contexts, yet we many times do the same thing in order to sup port what we want to be lieve. One can sup port any thing he wants to be lieve by ig nor ing the con text of the pas sages he uses. We will find that a tre men dous amount of "prophetic" pas sages will only "work" by re moving them from their con text.²⁵

Herod's Temple

The beauty of the tem ple mo ti vated our Lord's words in this chap ter. Jo se phus de scribes the tem ple:

Now the tem ple was built of stones that were white and strong, and each of their length was twenty-five cubits, their height was eight, and their breadth about twelve; and the whole struc ture, as also the struc ture of the royal clois ter, was on each side much lower, but the mid dle was much higher, till they were visi ble to those that dwelt in the coun try for a great many fur longs, but chiefly to such as lived over against them, and those that ap proached to them. The tem ple had doors also at the en trance, and lin tels over them, of the same height with the tem ple itself. They were adorned with em broi dered veils, with their flow ers of pur ple, and pil lars in ter wov en; and over these, but un der the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hang ing down from a great height, the lar ge ness and fine work man ship of which was a sur pris ing sight to the spec ta tors, to see what vast ma te ri als there were, and with what great skill the work man ship was done. He also en com passed the en tire tem ple with very large clois ters, con triv ing them to be in a due pro por tion thereto; and he laid out larger sums of money upon them than had been done be fore him, till it seemed that no one else had so greatly adorned the tem ple as he [Herod, ed.] had done...²⁶

Ed er sheim de scribes the pil grim's im pres sion of the tem ple as he went to the tem ple:

As the pil grim as cended the Mount, crested by that sym met ri cally pro por tioned build ing, which could hold within its gi gan tic gir dle not fewer than 210,000 per sons, his won der might well in crease at every step. The Mount it self seemed like an is land, abruptly ris ing from out deep val leys, sur rounded by a sea of walls, pal aces, streets, and houses, and crowned by a mass of snowy mar ble and glit ter ing gold, ris ing ter race upon ter race. Al to gether it measured a square of about 1,000 feet...²⁷

²⁴ Darby, *Collected Writings*, II:93, 1852. See *The Death of Victory* for the development of Darby's teaching and the CIS connection.

²⁵ In our book, *The Death of Victory*, we cover the development of a new method of Bible study—"Bible Readings." This method was developed after 1850. "Bible Reading" takes a subject and pursues that subject through Scripture, with no regard for the context of the supportive passages for that subject. Through "Bible Readings," a teacher can teach about anything from a passage, and when challenged on the context of his support passages, he can accuse the challenger of not believing the Bible. The "Bible Reading" method of study was a key in developing the modern Dispensationalism that places many already fulfilled prophetic passages into the future—yet to be fulfilled. Another key in defending modern Dispensationalism was placing the date of the Revelation after the destruction of Jerusalem, a date that will not hold up if honestly examined from the evidence within the book.

²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XV, Chap. XI, § 3.

²⁷ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book I.243. Eerdmans.

Dates

Herod the Great's (BC 73-4 AD) reign was from BC 40-4 AD. He under took the rebuilding of the temple in the eighteenth year of his reign, BC 22. The temple was *in building, forty and six years*. (Jn. 2:22.) Accordingly, the temple was not completed until 24 AD.²⁸

We cannot imagine the outward beauty of Herod's Temple. We can assume, accordingly, that this splendid and beautiful spectacle was only a very few years old when Christ came into it to present himself as the Lord God of the nation and its temple. We should not miss the point that the heavenly Father, using a pagan ruler, prepared for his only begotten Son a magnificent, new building from which to preach his sermons to the multitudes. When the purpose of the building was done and its Lord rejected, it was destroyed.

Christ Departs the Temple

Our Lord has finished his ministry to the Jewish nation—the *builders* rejected their rightful king. He has preached, warned and pleaded, all to no avail. Now Christ departs the temple, never to return in his earthly ministry. As Christ and the disciples depart, the disciples call his attention to the beauty of the Herod the Great's temple buildings.

The Answer

Rather than answering their comment on the beauty of the temple (which was only a few years old and the workmen were probably still putting the finishing touches on it), our Lord had a strange response to the disciples' wonder at the beauty of these buildings. He said that every stone of these beautiful magnificent temple buildings would be totally thrown down—not a stone would remain upon the other.

Titus at first tried to salvage the temple after it was set afire. His attempts failed, and at last he ordered that the temple and the whole city be pulled down. The fire melted what gold was left in the temple and the men pulled the stones apart to retrieve every last speck of gold. The city (Jerusalem) was totally leveled, except for a small portion left for the Roman garrison. The destruction was so total that a passer-by would not believe that it had ever been inhabited. A small portion also was left to show the might of a once great city that Rome conquered and pulled down.²⁹

Vv. 3-31, our Lord continues out of town with his disciples. He took them to the mount of Olives where they could see the temple. (Mk. 13:3.) While seated here, the disciples ask him some questions. There are at least two and maybe three questions:

- 1.) When shall these things be?
- 2.) What shall be the sign of thy coming?
- 3.) What shall be the sign of the end of the age?

And these questions are still asked to day, and will be asked until the end of all things. As answered the questions, our Lord intermingled his answers. His answers to the questions will not be sorted out until we see him—reminding us that the purpose of God's word is not to answer curious questions about the future, but to show us how to live and serve the Lord now.

The disciples' questions arouse great interest in the human heart even to day. There are very profitable "ministries" built on trying to answer these questions, and people are easily influenced in these things—prophetic conferences will draw both a large crowd and good "offerings." Prophetic charts and diagrams sell like crazy, as men teach God's hidden things as though the Lord himself confronted with them before the beginning of time.

²⁸ See Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XV, Chap. XI, § 1 and Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book 1. 375, note. All times are approximate.

²⁹ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 4, § 5, Book VII, Chapter 1, § 1, etc.

As we keep in mind the events leading to the disciples' questions, some of the answers are quite obvious, though others are not. Seemingly, the obvious questions and answers are the ones greatly misused today.

No tice v. 4 and our Lord's warning—*Take heed that no man deceive you*. Remember, that very afternoon, just a short time ago, he had given eight woes against false teachers. Throughout the day in his exchange with *the builders*, he had promised the total destruction of both them and their city (Jerusalem). As usual, he has already laid the groundwork for this question and answer period on the mount of Olives. If we overlook the eight marks of the false teacher (there are others which we did not cover, but I think all of the marks will fall within the eight woes Christ gave) and accept his teaching, then we deserve what we get. Our Lord's warning here is especially important considering the vast number of people today who are at tempting to schedule God concerning question of prophecy and signs of the end.

As we look at the Lord's answers to the disciples' questions, we can not be dogmatic. However, we will look at them in the light of what is demanded by the context, not by what is demanded by the prevalent theories of our day. There are also some quite obvious fulfillments of what is said here. Of course, we also have many applications even though they may be fulfilled.

"The most important thing for his disciples was not that they might know when 'these things' would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time. (CHS)" It seems as though since Darby, we have been overwhelmed with people looking for "these things." We should be emphasizing how we might preserve not only ourselves, but those around us in the *faith once delivered to the saints* in these evil times.

Note the major concern that brought about the questions—the Lord had just spoken of the quickly approaching destruction of the temple. (Mt. 24:2.) So the disciples ask, "When will this be, Lord?" Therefore, vv. 4-6 are Christ giving some things that must take place before the time when *there shall not be left here one stone upon another*. He said that before that time, there will be many come professing to be the Christ, and many will be deceived by them. Of course, his tory is full of men who have made this profession since Jerusalem fell.

False Prophets

Verses 4, 5 (v. 11, Lk. 21:8; see also Mt. 24:26), false prophets. There are many accounts of many false prophets, prophets who assured the Jews who were facing the Roman army that God was on their side despite their rebellion against their rightful king. They promised that he would save them from Rome:

...Nor did any one of them escape with his life. A false prophet (19) was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose on the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such his deliverance.

3. Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but, like men in fatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them...³⁰

The false prophets persuaded multitudes of people of last minute deliverance by God:

4. Now if any one consider these things, he will find that God takes care of mankind, and by all ways possible foreshows to our race what is for their preservation; but that men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; for the Jews, by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple four-square, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracles, "That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become four-square." But now, what did the most

³⁰ Wars, Book 6, Chapter 5, § 2, 3. Note (19): "Reland here takes notice, that these Jews, who had despised the true Prophet, were deservedly abused and deluded by these false ones."

evaluate them in undertaking this war [against Rome, which led to their total destruction, e.d.], was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, “about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.” The Jews took this prediction to be long to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure, and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction.³¹

One should observe that the false prophets promised these people God’s deliverance from the results of their rebellion against the law-word of God. They also promised the one day the Jews would rule the whole earth.

Wars and ru mors of wars have been almost without ceasing since Christ spoke these words, both before and since Jerusalem’s overthrow. Wars will continue until every nation is brought under subjection to the Prince of Peace. (Mt. 22:44.)

However, when Christ spoke these words, Jerusalem was at peace. But in the few years following Christ’s death, four Roman emperors met with a violent death (within a period of 18 months—this would be like four of our presidents being killed within 18 months). This speedy turnover resulted in the formation of very violent and bloody parties attempting to gain the Roman seat of power. Josephus gives accounts of the many wars and ru mors of wars. All of these things pointed to the end of the Jewish economy that Christ spoke of from on the mount.³²

The Jewish economy had been in place since Joseph took his family, the children of Israel, into Egypt. Moses placed the Jewish economy in writing, yet the nation and its leaders were already established before Moses. (Ex. 4:29.) Therefore, the system that was going to be judged for rejecting the King’s right to rule over them was over 1500 years old. Accordingly, it not only required some very strong words from our Lord, but some very strong prophetic statements and natural (supernatural) events to confirm his words of warning, so his elect would flee from the city. Jerusalem—Zion—had been proclaimed as the city of the Great King. How could the King allow it to fall? This false assurance led to its stubbornness and subsequent fall.

Sitting here on the mount, our Lord spoke of overturning the oldest institution in the world at that time, the 1500 year old Jewish nation. We must not take that fact lightly; we must realize the gravity of the prophesied overthrow.

The overwhelming Scriptural evidence and historical evidence requires that a very large portion of Matthew 24 be understood as prophesying the soon coming destruction of the Jewish economy, centered Jerusalem and the temple. Required, therefore, is that Revelation 18 describes the destruction. (We will examine the date and purpose of the Revelation elsewhere.)

Chapter XIV

Revelation 18

Revelation 18 describes the destruction of the whore. In Matthew 21-23, the Lord clearly condemned Jerusalem for refusing to recognize her rightful king and husband—she absolutely refused to come to the wedding. Though many Old Testament prophets had been sent to her, the Lord also told *the builders* that throughout Israel’s history, she had refused her rightful husband; rather, her heart was toward here unlawful lovers. (See Ezk. 16 and 23 a graphic illustration.)

³¹ Wars, Book 6, Chapter 5, § 4.

³² E.g., *Antiq.* 18, Chapter 5, § 3. We urge the reader to follow Barnes’ account in Matthew 24. *Matthew*, 251, 252. All of *Barnes’ Notes* are being placed on *Online Bible*, CDROM. Also, see *Christ/Caesar, where is the line drawn?* Romans 13:1-7, by Pastor Need.)

In our Lord's message from Matthew 21:23 to 23:39, he told his disciples, and all who heard him, that not only did the nation commit whoredoms, but she killed her right ful husband and king in fa vor of her lov ers—she was in love with her gold, sil ver and fine goods as she sold out to her lov ers.

The Whore

We should keep in mind that the pri mary use of the word *whore* in Scripture refers to idola try—whore doms against the true God, *i.e.*, the re fusal to sub mit to the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Com pare Rev. 18:20 with Mt. 23:34- 39.) Clearly, the de struc tion prophe sied in Reve la tion 18 is God's ven ge ance for his holy apos tles and proph ets. (John the Bap tist was the last of the Old Tes ta ment proph ets; the Apos tle John was the last of the holy apos tles.) There fore, every context points to Reve la tion 18 being the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, which is con firmed by Reve la tion 19:2. Accord ingly, every thing up to Reve la tion 19 has been ful filled, and our pres ent age is chap ter 19. (This writer does not claim wis dom rests with him, but hav ing thor oughly stud ied the con text of Mt. 24, this view of Rev. 18, 19, fits that con text far bet ter than try ing to place chap. 18 into the fu ture, yet to be fulfilled.)

One World Government

“But,” what about the at tempts to unite a one world gov ern ment apart from God—in fact, to over throw God?” We must an swer that ques tion with this ques tion: “What's new about that?” The dream of a one world gov ern ment apart from God did not die with Nim rod and Ba bel; the dream and goal of fallen men since Nim rod has been and con tin ues to be a one world gov ern ment where man sets him self up as god. God thwarted Nim rod's plan, and he has thwarted every one since. The dream will not die un til God stops it with ei ther a change of heart or the end of time.

Note that Christ's victory over death cast down the accuser of the brethren—Revelation 12:10- 12 is dis tinctly past tense. The vic tory ob tained over the wicked one by faith is pre sented as a defi nite fact en tirely in the past:

A loud voice in heaven celebrates the vic tory which has just oc curred be fore the eye of the seer, over the ad ver sary of Christ and his king dom (vv. 10- 12a), as one in which be liev ers also are to par ti ci pate, ver. 10... sal va tion in the spe cific Chris tian sense,—not “vic tory,” ... The breth ren of those by whom, in a loud voice, the song of praise is raised, are un doubt edly be liev ers in the earth ly life, for only they could be de posed to the ac cu sa tion on the part of Sa tan... Ver. 11... the idea ... here is the same as ev ery where in the Apoc., which re gards every kind of temp ta tion which Sa tan has pre pared for be liev ers as a mighty con flict, and there fore every con fir ma tion of faith as a vic tory over the arch-enemy. On the fun da men tal con cep tion, 1 John ii. 13, 14, is to be com pared, al though, as the form, so also the refer ence there is dif fer ent... The vic tory of be liev ers on earth is based upon the vic tory won over Sa tan in heaven; the pe cu li ar truth, how ever, in what is re ported from ver. 7 on, and the oc cur rences be held, must be prop erly un der stood as the ac tu al cause of the vic tory for be liev ers on earth,—is Christ's vic tory over Sa tan. This vic tory the Lamb has won over the dragon by shed ding his blood. The blood of the Lamb is there fore the cause of the vic tory of be liev ers...³³

Thus the idea that Reve la tion is ba si cally ful filled up through Reve la tion 19:2 fits far better within its context than say ing it must yet be fulfilled.

Spurgeon seems to go along the same line of thought, but he ex pands it more than Bar nes'. Spur geon uses Mat thew 24 to es tab lish some pre cepts that will re main in ef fect un til the Fa ther makes all of Christ's ene mies His foot stool.³⁴

The con text over whelm ingly de mand that a very large por tion of Mat thew 24 be viewed as the warn ing con cern ing the quickly ap proach ing de struc tion of Je ru sa lem. Accord ingly, both the Old Testa ment proph ets and our Lord's prophe cies require that Revelation 18 be viewed as the de struc tion of the old Jewish economy. The nation, represented by Jerusalem, had been called for 1,500 years to its right ful King and Hus band, yet it re jected the call in fa vor of its lov ers. No doubt we fail to realize the hold and power that this 1,500 year old system had upon all thinking of

³³ Friedrich Dusterdieck, *Myer's Commentary on the New Testament*, 11.314, 315. First English edition, 1883 (Alpha Publications 1979 reprint).

³⁴ See Spurgeon's 45th Psalm, *Treasury of David*.

Christ's day—we can not imagine what a traumatic event the destruction of a 1,500 year old economy was going to be.

See that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass. (Mt. 24:6.) What a message for God's people of all ages—we do not have to look far to see and hear of wars. Our Lord says here we should not be troubled, for these things must take place before righteousness can reign. But the end is not yet:

The destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning of the end, the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. It was an end; but not the end. (CHS)

In the destruction of Jerusalem, described basically in the Revelation of Jesus Christ's moving against man's rebellion, we have a record of man's rebellion against his lawful King, and the assurance of God's continuing judgment against sin. "But" you say, "they crucified the Lord of Glory—they deserved to be judged, and their city destroyed." However, we see from Hebrews 6:6 and 10:26-31 that Jerusalem's destruction was only God's opening volley against those who attempt to overthrow the Lord and His Christ.

1.) The Jews (Israelites) may have been morally good people, yet they refused to allow the King to reign over them.

2.) The Jews (Israelites) were known as "God's people, by they would not accept the word of God.

3.) The Jews (Israelites) had many messengers sent to them by God, in his long-suffering and patience. (See Rom. 2:1-6.)

When the time was right, judgment came, and what a judgment it was. The judgment against Jerusalem—and prophesied in the Revelation—is the assurance that God will judge every effort of rebellion against him. Not one thought escapes his notice; not one ounce of effort will avoid his gaze. (Heb. 4:13.) The context of Matthew 24 clearly tells us that the reason Israel of old was utterly destroyed was because it refused to submit to the King of kings; it refused to allow the Lord of Glory to rule over them. (Mt. 21:33-46, 1 Cor. 2:8.) When the time is right, the Lord will move against all ungodliness. (Rom. 1:18.)

Those who are trying to obey Matthew 21:41 (and render the householder his fruit) also have the assurance that the rebellious attitude displayed around them has God's judgment against it; those who were secure in their sin in Jerusalem found out that they could not escape the results of their sin.

The Beginning of Sorrows

Matthew 24:5-8

Christ defines the things that are **only the beginning of sorrows**. Reading the passage in its historical context, the things Christ spoke of were future from the time he spoke, not future from the time his words are read. The terrible events listed by our Lord are easily traced in secular history, showing that events were the events leading up to the **sorrow**—the destruction of Jerusalem. It was from Jerusalem, the seat of the Jews, that the real threat to the new church came—the danger, that Paul deals with in every one of his books, was the subversion from within, *i.e.*, the Judaizers, not from without, *e.g.*, Roman persecution.³⁵

V. 7, nation against nations, famines, earthquakes and *fearful sights and great signs from heaven*. (Lk. 21:11.)

The word of God basically records only what is needed for man to know God truly, *e.g.*, his redemptive plan throughout the ages, his holiness, his mercy, his grace, his workings in and through man in his story, etc. There is very little record of his historical events that do not deal directly with his people and his plan for the ages. He does, however, give us occasional glimpses, *e.g.*, Acts 11:28.

³⁵ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 9. See Appendix D for an examination of Christ's words in vv. 7-14.

There fore, if we would know the his tory around the Scrip tures, we must ex am ine secu lar his tory to see what took place around God's writ ten rec ord of ac tiv ity on this earth, and this is where secu lar his to ri ans like Jo se phus come in. He, and other his to ri ans, rec ords the dis cord among the na tions, the fam ines, earth quakes, etc, that took place be tween the time of Christ's words and the destruction foretold by Christ in Matthew 24, *e.g.*, famines, *Antiq.* 20, Chapter 2; earthquakes (such as Pompeii³⁶); great and fear ful signs from heaven:

The *fearful sights* and great signs from heaven are no doubt among the most re mark able of all the events lead ing to the fi nal act in God's his tory of old Is rael. These signs *from heaven* were Gods' final warn ing to the 1,500 year old na tion of Is rael:

Thus were the mis er able peo ple per suaded by these de ceiv ers, and such as be lied God him self; while they did not at tend, nor give credit; to the signs that were so evi dent and did so plainly fore tell their future deso la tion; but, like men in fa tu ated, with out ei ther eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not re gard the de nun c ia tions that God made to them. Thus there was a star (20) re sem bling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that con tin ued a whole year. Thus also, be fore the Jews' re bel lion, and be fore those com mo tions which pre ceded the war, when the peo ple were come in great crowds to the feast of un leav ened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xan thicus (21) [Ni san], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the al tar and the holy house, that it ap peared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the un skill ful, but was so in ter preted by the sa cred scribes, as to por tend those events that fol lowed im me di ately upon it. At the same fes ti val also, a heifer, as she was led by the high- priest to be sac ri ficed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the tem ple. Moreo ver, the east ern gate of the in ner (22) [court of the] tem ple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with dif fi culty shut by twenty men and rested upon a ba sis armed with iron, and had bolts fas tened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one en tire stone, was seen to be opened of its own ac cord about the sixth hour of the night. Now, those that kept watch in the tem ple came here upon run ning to the cap tain of the tem ple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not with out great dif fi culty, was able to shut the gate again. This also ap peared to the vul gar to be a very happy prod igy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of hap pi ness. But the men of learn ing un der stood it, that the se cu rity of their holy house was dis solved of it own ac cord, and that the gate was opened for the ad van tage of their ene mies. So these pub licly de clared, that this signal fore showed the deso la tion that was com ing upon them. Be sides these, a few days af ter that feast, on the one-and- twen tieth day of the month Ar tem isisus [Jyar], a cer tain pro di gious and in credi ble phe nome non ap peared; I sup pose the ac count of it would seem to be a fa ble, were it not re lated by those that saw it, and were not the events that fol lowed it of so consid er able a na ture as to de serve such sig nals; for, be fore sun- setting, chari ots and troops of sol diers in their ar mor were seen run ning about among the clouds, and sur round ing of cit ies. Moreo ver at that feast which we call Pen te cost, as the priests were go ing by night into the in ner (22) [court of the] tem ple, as their cus tom was, to per form their sa cred min is tra tions, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quak ing, and heard a great noise, and af ter that they heard a sound as of a great mul ti tude, say ing, "Let us re move hence." But, what is still more ter rible there was one Je sus, the son of An anus, a ple be ian and a hus band man, who, four years be fore the war be gan, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and pros per ity, came to that feast whereon it is our cus tom for every one to make tab er na cles to God in the tem ple, (23) be gan on a sud den to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Je ru sa lem and the holy house, a voice against the bride grooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole peo ple!" This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city. How ever, cer tain of the most emi nent among the popu lace had great in dig na tion of this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of se vere stripes; yet did not he ei ther say any thing for him self or any thing pe cu liar to those that chas tised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried be fore. Here upon our rul ers sup pos ing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of di vine fury in the man, brought him to the Ro man pro cu ra tor; where he was whipped till his bones were laid care; yet did he not make any sup pli ca tion for him self, nor shed any tears, but turn ing his voice to the most lam en ta ble tone pos si ble, at every stroke of the whipped his an swer was, "Woe, woe to Je ru sa lem!" And when Al binus (for he was then our pro cura tor) asked him, Who he was? and whence he came? and why he ut tered such words? he made no man ner of re ply to what he said, but still did not leave off his mel an choly ditty, till Al binus took him to be a mad man and dis missed him. Now, dur ing all the time that passed be fore the war be gan, this man did not go near any of the citi z ens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day ut tered these lam en ta ble words, as if it were his pre m edi ated vow, "Woe, woe to Je ru sa lem!" Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his re ply to all men, and in deed no other than a mel an choly pre sage of what was to come. This cry of his was the loud est at the fes ti vals; and he con tin ued this ditty for seven years and five months, with out grow ing hoarse, or be ing tired there with, un til the very time that he saw his pre sage in ear nest ful filled in our siege,

36 "The Romans regarded Vesuvius as an extinct volcano, and the destruction by earthquake of parts of Pompeii and nearby HERCULANEUM in AD 62 was not interpreted as a sign of its renewed activity. Reconstruction was still in progress when, 17 years later, on the morning of Aug. 24, 79, the great eruption took place that destroyed Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae, and a number of smaller settlements. When the eruption ceased on the second day, more than 2,000 inhabitants of Pompeii had perished, and the city lay covered under a layer of ash and volcanic debris about 6 m (20 ft) deep. An eyewitness account of the calamity is given in two letters written to the historian Tacitus by the Roman author Pliny the Younger, whose uncle lost his life at Pompeii." *Multimedia Encyclopedia*, ver. 1.

when it ceased; for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, "Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!" And just as he added at the last, — "Woe, woe to myself also!" there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.³⁷

One should note that before the Jewish-Roman war, the city slated for destruction was in an assured state of peace and safety: *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then suddenly destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* (1 Thes. 5:3.)

Verse 9, note Mark's account of the Lord's words:

But take heed to your selves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. (13:9)

Here the Lord spoke of the period before Jerusalem's destruction. During the time from the Lord's death to the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews had great power throughout the Roman empire to pursue and persecute Christians, e.g., Saul before becoming Paul. The Lord warns his disciples that they would *be brought before rulers and kings for his sake*—Herod killed James, and Paul went before Felix, Festus, Gallio, Agrippa and Nero. (Ac. chps. 12, 18, 24, 25, 26.) The Jewish power of persecution was broken in 70 A.D. After the Jewish-Roman war and Jerusalem's destruction, Christians no longer were hauled before the Jewish councils, nor were they beaten in the Jewish synagogues. Also, the terrible Roman persecution under Nero took place before the destruction of Jerusalem—in fact, most of the apostles died of persecution before Jerusalem was destroyed.³⁸

10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought before hand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but what so ever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

Mark parallels Matthew 24:14:

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

This passage speaks of the time before the final destruction of the Jewish nation.³⁹

Matthew 24:14 was literally fulfilled:

14. *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.* The evidence that this was done is to be chiefly derived from the New Testament, and there it is clear. Thus Paul declares that it was preached to every creature under heaven (Col. I. 6, 23); that the faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole world (Ro. I. 8); that he preached in Arabia (Ga. I. 17), and at Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum (Ro. xv. 19). We know also that he traveled through Asia Minor, Greece, and Crete; that he was in Italy, and probably in Spain and Gaul, Ro. xv. 24-28. At the same time, the other apostles were not idle; and there is full proof that within thirty years after this prophecy was spoken, churches were established in all these regions. ¶ *For a witness unto all nations.* This preaching the gospel indiscriminately to all the Gentiles shall be a proof to them, or a witness, that the division between the Jews and Gentiles was about to be broken down. Hitherto the blessings of revelation had been confined to the Jews. They were the peculiar people of God. His messengers had been sent to them only. Either, therefore, God sent the gospel to all other people, it was proof, or a witness unto them, that the peculiar Jewish economy was at an end. ¶ *Then shall the end come.* The end of the Jewish economy; the destruction of the temple and the city.⁴⁰

The substantial fulfillment of this prediction is found in the missionary labors of the apostles, above all in those of Paul.⁴¹

37 Wars, Book 6, Chapter 5, § 3. "(20) Whether Josephus means that this star was different from that comet which lasted a whole year, I cannot certainly determine. His words most favor their being different one from another. (21) Since Josephus still uses the Syro-Macedonian month Xanthicus for the Jewish month Nisan, this eighth, or, as Nicephorus reads it, this ninth of Xanthicus or Nisan was almost a week before the Passover, on the fourteenth; about which time we learn from St. John that many used to go "out of the country to Jerusalem to purify themselves," John 11:55, with 12:1; in agreement with Josephus also, B. V. ch. 3. sect. 1. And it might well be, that in the sight of these this extraordinary light might appear. (22) This here seems to be the court of the priests. (23) Both Reland and Havercamp in this place alter the natural punctuation and sense of Josephus, and this contrary to the opinion of Valesilus and Dr. Hudson, lest Josephus should say that the Jews built booths or tents within the temple at the feast of tabernacles; which the later Rabbins will not allow to have been the ancient practice: but then, since it is expressly told us in Nehemiah, ch. 8:16, that in still elder times "the Jews made booths in the courts of the house of God" at that festival, Josephus may well be permitted to say the same. And indeed the modern Rabbins are of very small authority in all such matters of remote antiquity." *Ibid.*

38 See *Christ/Caesar, Where is the Line Drawn, Romans 13:1-7*, by Pastor Need.

39 *All nations*—"There was a necessity of the promulgation of it by the will of God, the command and commission of Christ; and for the gathering in of the Jews, that were the elect of God, "among all nations" of the world, especially in the Roman empire; and that "first", or before the destruction of Jerusalem. (Gill)"

40 Barns. "Not the end of the world, as the Ethiopic version reads it, and others understand it; but the end of the Jewish state, the end of the city and temple; so that the universal preaching of the Gospel all over the world, was the last criterion and sign, of the destruction of Jerusalem; and the account of that itself next follows, with the dismal circumstances which attended it. (Gill)" See Ac. 2:5, 4:4-7, 16:24, 18:12, 24:24, 25:23, Col. 1:23 and etc.

41 Meyer. "Comp. Acts I.9; Rom. I. 14, x. 18, xv. 19; Matt. xxviii. 19; Col. I. 23; Clem. 1 Cor. v."

Paul himself said that Mat thew 24:14 was fulfilled by the evangelistic efforts of the first Christians. Robertson says of Colossians 1:23:

{Preached} (*kêruchthentos*). First aorist passive participle of *kêrussô*, to herald, to proclaim. {In all creation} (*en pasêi ktisei*). |Ktisis| is the act of founding (Ro 1:20) from *ktizô* (verse Col 1:16), then a created thing (Ro 1:25), then the sum of created things as here and Re 3:14. It is hyperbole, to be sure, but Paul does not say that all men are converted, but only that the message has been heralded abroad over the Roman Empire in a wider fashion than most people imagine. {A minister} (*diakonos*). General term for service (*dia, konis*, raising a dust by speed) and used of ten as here of preachers like our “minister” to day, one who serves. Jesus used the verb *diakonêsai* of himself (Mr 10:45). Our “deacon” is this word transliterated and given a technical meaning as in Php 1:1.⁴²

Our Lord told them of the terrible persecution by the Jews that the preachers of the gospel of the kingdom would receive. He assured them of God’s protection (Lk. 21:18, Mt. 24:13, Mk. 13:13), and assured them that before the Jewish economy was destroyed, the gospel will go world-wide. The church would be established world-wide before Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Verse 10, the persecution, the Lord said, would cause many professed followers to be *offended, and to betray one another*. Those who would not apostatize completely would compromise from the pressure of money and/or worldly influence. The evil one has many tools to dissuade the zealous Christian.

Verse 11, the false promise of the Lord’s aid was to inspire confidence in God, so the people would not desert the doomed city. (See vv. 4, 5.)

Verse 12, *because iniquity shall abound...* Because of the influence of the false teachers as well as the persecution, even to death, many Christians gave up their profession—their zeal for Christ was dampened if not outright extinguished.

We fail to realize the tremendous hatred the Jews had for Christians. The Jews pursued the Christians from city to city, both to subvert the gospel message of faith alone in Christ and to kill the new converts. False teachers crept in to the new church and lead many astray. (Ac. 9, Gal. 1, 2 Pet. 2.)

Though our Lord’s words are a direct prophecy concerning the time until the final destruction of Jerusalem, easily followed throughout the New Testament, their application is forever. As long as there are sinful men, they will hate Christ. The heaven will spare no effort nor expense in their efforts *against the Lord, and against his anointed*. The false teachers abound to seduce God’s people away from God’s word, asuring them that they have God’s protection though they live in rebellion against his law-word. Verses 9-12 is a good summation of how sinful men will act to ward Christianity.

Verse 13, *shall endure... saved*. (Lk. 21:18.) The context of this promise by the Lord clearly requires that it refer to the end of the Jewish economy, 70 A.D.:

the same shall be saved; with a temporal salvation, when Jerusalem, and the unbelieving inhabitants of it shall be destroyed: for those that believed in Christ, many of them, through persecution, were obliged to remove from thence; and others, by a voice from heaven, (see v. 7, ed.) were bid to go out of it, as they did; and removed to Pella, a village a little beyond Jordan {u}, and so were preserved from the general calamity; and also with an everlasting salvation, which is the case of all that persevere to the end, as all true believers in Christ will.⁴³

Those who believed Christ’s words concerning this horrible event fled and were spared, saved.

Of course, we can not overlook the many passages promising security to the believer—his people will endure to the end because he is doing the keeping. (Phil. 1:6, Jn. 6:37, etc.)

⁴² Robertson’s Word Pictures.

⁴³ Gill. “{u} Euseb. Eccl. Hist. 1. 3. c. 5.”

Chapter XV

The Great Tribulation

No one denies that the Lord Jesus fore told of a *great tribulation* to come. The disagreement is over when that *tribulation* will come, and upon whom it is to come. The term *The Great Tribulation* is from Mat thew 24: 21.

15 When ye there fore shall see the abomi na tion of deso la tion, spo ken of by Dan iel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him un der stand:) 16 Then let them which be in Ju daea flee into the moun tains: 17 Let him which is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Nei ther let him which is in the field re turn back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the win ter, nei ther on the sab bath day: 21 For then shall be great tribu la tion, such as was not since the be gin ning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And ex c ept those days should be short ened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be short ened. (Mt. 24:15- 22.)

What was Christ speak ing of when he prom ised *great tribulation* in those days? He said that the com ing events, fu ture from when he spoke, would be like noth ing *since the beginning of the world* nor like anything that will ever take place after the *great tribulation*. The context of his words clearly re quires that Christ is re fer ring to the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, for that has been his pri mary topic from Mat thew 21.

The con text of our Lord's words fore tell ing the *great tribulation* de mands that they re fer to the de struc tion of those who killed the Son of God. Only by vio lently tor tur ing the Lord's words can one make his fore told *great tribulation* re fer to any thing other than the hor ri ble events of 70 AD.⁴⁴

No doubt the events fore told by our Lord in Mat thew 24 also pres ent a gen eral out line of fallen man's mili tancy against the Lord through out time.

Revolt

The Jews' re volt was not against Rome but against God, a fact Christ re minded them of. (Mt. 22:21.) Their re volt against Rome was only the re sult of that in ner re volt. Slav ery is the natu ral re sult of not sub mit ting to God in all things. A re volt against that slav ery will only re sult in de struc tion, as it did these Jews. When men ful fill their re spon si bil ity to God, then GOD RE MOVES the chains of slav ery. He alone can give free dom, and there is no free dom apart from this fact. What took place in *the great tribulation* was to tally in ac cord with the law of Moses. (Dt. 28:68.)

The Abomination of Desolation

{The abomi na tion of deso la tion} (*to bdel ugma tês er emôseôs*). An al lu sion to Da 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. Antio chus Epiphanes erected an al tar to Zeus on the al tar of Je ho vah (1Macc. 1:54,59; 6:7; 2Macc. 6:1-5). The deso la tion in the mind of Je sus is ap par ently the Ro man army (Lu 21:20) in the tem ple, an ap pli ca tion of the words of Dan iel to this dread event. The verb *bdelussomai* is to feel nau sea be cause of stench, to ab hor, to de test. Idola try was a stench to God (Lu 16:15; Re 17:4). Jo se phus tells us that the Ro mans burned the tem ple and of fered sac r i fices to their en signs placed by the east ern gate when they pro claimed Ti tus as Em peror.

{Let him that readeth un der stand} (*ho an agi nos kôn noeitô*). This pa ren the sis oc curs also in Mr 13:14. It is not to be sup posed that Je sus used these words. They were in serted by Mark as he wrote his book and he was fol lowed by Mat thew.⁴⁵

There are sev eral points for con sid era tion from this sec tion. Oth ers have dealt with the vari ous pas sages, so we need not "re in vent" the wheel. Rather, we will quote what oth ers have said.

⁴⁴ 2 Pet. 3:16. "wrest the word of God, distort it from its true sense and meaning, and make it speak that which it never designed; dealing with it as innocent persons are sometimes used, put upon a rack, and tortured, and so forced to speak what is contrary to their knowledge and consciences; and so were the words of the Apostle Paul wrested by ill designing men, as about the doctrines of grace and works, so concerning the coming of Christ; see Ro 3:8 2Th 2:1,2; as [they do] also the other Scriptures; the writings of Moses, and the prophets of the Old Testament, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the other epistles of the apostles of the New Testament: and which is eventually." Gill.

⁴⁵ Robertson.

The Lord told his disciples that the event that would single that the *Great Tribulation* was upon them would be *the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet*.

There are three cross reference passages in Daniel— Da 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.

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, {c} and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Dan. 9:27. “{c} Meaning that Jerusalem and the sanctuary would be utterly destroyed because of their rebellion against God, and their idolatry: or as some read, that the plague will be so great, that they will all be astonished at them. [Geneva]”)

We will not examine the *seventy weeks*; rather, we will simply look at the consummation of those weeks. The *Great Tribulation* concluded those weeks, and according to our Lord's definition, that *Great Tribulation* had to be the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, that destruction fulfilled Daniel 9:27.⁴⁶

Daniel 11:31, no doubt spoke of Antiochus Epiphanes (175- 164 BC)—he polluted the sanctuary and the holy people, set up altars, groves and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts. The books of the Maccabees describe what took place during that time. His actions were referred to by Christ as typifying what was shortly going to take place against Jerusalem and the temple. (*Ant.* Book 12, Chapter 5, § 4. *Wars*, Book 1, Chapter 1, § 1-5.)

Daniel 12:11, uses highly figurative language to foretell the hostile undertakings of Antiochus against Judaism, which forms a type of the continuing war of the spirit of Antichrist (1 Jn. 4:3) against the Gospel Church. Matthew Henry offers a good comment in Daniel 12:5-13:

Whether it looks so far forward or no I can not tell; but this, however, we may learn, *First*, That there is a time fixed for the termination of the church's troubles, and the bringing about of her deliverance, and that this time will be punctually observed to a day. *Secondly*, That this time must be waited for with faith and patience. *Thirdly*, That, when it comes, it will abundantly recompense us for our long expectation of it. *Blessed is he* who, having waited long, comes to it at least, for he will then have reason to say, *Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him.*⁴⁷

Daniel's Stone

We must view “prophesy” after the image in Daniel chapter two in light of that image. The *stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands* broke the image and ground it into dust to be carried away by the wind. That *stone* was Christ, the *Stone* the *builders* rejected. There is no Biblical prospect of the image being re-gathered after the *stone struck* it. The feet was Rome, and Christ struck the feet.

The only way a future one-world government under a literal Antichrist will work as taught in modern Dispensationalism is to say that the *stone* has not yet struck the image—the image actually still stands, and will be recognized again as a one-world government under the Antichrist. Then the Lord will destroy it at his coming to set up his literal kingdom after *The Great Tribulation*. This teaching of a *Great Tribulation* was introduced by the Roman Jesuit, Lacunza in his 1791 *Ben-Ezra* document. He also introduced the idea of a personal Antichrist, and a great many other things that are now taught by those who places Matthew 24 in the future from the time it is read rather than from the time it was spoken.⁴⁸

The initial *abomination that maketh desolate* was accomplished by Antiochus Epiphanes. His actions looked forward to what was going to take place under the Romans. It also foretold the hostility of the spirit of the Antichrist against the Gospel Church, and the final victory of the Gospel Church over that spirit through the Spirit of God.

Thus when Christ, speaking of what was soon to come, said, *When ye there fore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place*, the disciples knew very well what he spoke of, for Antiochus Epiphanes' abominable actions were well known.

⁴⁶ For a good study on Daniel's seventy weeks, see Hengstenberg, *Christology*, 2.803-912.

⁴⁷ Matthew Henry. See also *Barnes' Notes & Keil-Delitzsch* on Dan. 12:11. ⁴⁸Ch. xi. 6 sees a preliminary historical embodiment of this view in Antiochus Epiphanes; and thus the Maccabean persecution, which contributed to the purification of the people, becomes a type of the last tribulation of the church, xii. 1, which shall be such as never was since there was a nation, but which shall conduce to the purification and preservation of the church, ver. 10." Oehler, 503.

⁴⁸ *Ben-Ezra*, I.xxvii, xliii.

The Roman ensign standing where it ought not stand (Mk. 13:14), told those left alive in the city there was no time for anything except to rapid flight to the mountains:

1. AND now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditions into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple (24) and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator (25) with the greatest acclamations of joy. And now all the soldiers had such vast quantities of the spoils which they had gotten by plunder, that in Syria a pound weight of gold was sold for half its former value. But as for those priests that kept themselves still upon the wall of the holy house... On the fifth day afterward, the priests that were pined with the famine came down, and when they were brought to Titus by the guards, they begged for their lives; but he replied, that the time of pardon was over as to them, and that this very holy house, on whose account only they could justly hope to be preserved, was destroyed; and that it was agreeable to their office that priests should perish with the house itself to which they belonged. So he ordered them to be put to death.⁴⁹

Titus tried to convince the Jewish “tyrants” (*i.e.*, the religious leaders who led the rebellion, and forced the people to remain inside the temple compound) to give up, and their lives would be spared:

... When I came near your temple, I again departed from the laws of war, and exhorted you to spare your own sanctuary, and to preserve your holy house to yourselves. I allowed you a quiet exit out of it, and security for your preservation; nay, if you had a mind, I gave you leave to fight in another place. Yet have you still despised every one of my proposals, and have set fire to your holy house with your own hands. And now, vile wretches, do you desire to treat with me by word of mouth? To what purpose is it that you would save such a holy house as this was, which is now destroyed? What preservation can you now desire after the destruction of your temple? Yet do you stand still at this very time in your armor; nor can you bring yourselves so much as to pretend to be supplicants even in this your utmost extremity. O miserable creatures! what is it you depend on? Are not your people dead? is not your holy house gone? is not your city in my power? and are not your own very lives in my hands? And do you still deem it a part of valor to die? How ever, I will not imitate your madness. If you throw down your arms, and deliver up your bodies to me, I grant you your lives; and I will act like a mild master of a family; what can not be healed shall be punished, and the rest I will preserve for my own use.⁵⁰

3. To that offer of Titus they made this reply: That they could not accept of it, because they had sworn never to do so; but they desired they might have leave to go through the wall that had been made about them, with their wives and children; for that they would go into the desert, and leave the city to him. At this Titus had great indignation, that when they were in the case of men already taken captives, they should pretend to make their own terms with him, as if they had been conquerors. So he ordered this proclamation to be made to them, That they should no more come out to him as deserters, nor hope for any further security; for that he would henceforth spare nobody, but fight them with his whole army; and that they must save themselves as well as they could; for that he would from henceforth treat them according to the laws of war. So he gave orders to the soldiers both to burn and to plunder the city; who did nothing in deed that day; but on the next day they set fire to the repository of the archives, to Acra, to the council-house, and to the place called Ophlas; at which time the fire proceeded as far as the palace of queen Helena, which was in the middle of Acra; the lanes also were burnt down, as were also those houses that were full of the dead bodies of such as were destroyed by famine.⁵¹

Thus “On the fifth day” after the Roman ensigns were set up over the temple, the priests came out, and asked to be allowed to take their families “into the desert, and leave the city to” Titus. Titus was moved with great indignation that these men who had been defeated in war should think they could dedicate the terms of peace. Titus then ordered the city to be burned and plundered, and the captives to fare the best they could in the wrath of Rome’s army. The city was burned the next day, 7 days after the Roman ensigns were worshiped in the temple. An extremely important point is that they intentionally burned **“the repository of the archives.”** And, hence, all genealogy records of the physical seed of Abraham were destroyed—those who were so proud of their physical lineage to Abraham are now cut off from that lineage.

Observe what our Lord said:

15 When ye there fore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field re-

49 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 6, § 1. (24) “Take Havercamp’s note here: ‘This (says he) is a remarkable place; and Tertullian truly says in his Apologetic, ch. 16. p. 162, that the entire religion of the Roman camp almost consisted in worshipping the ensigns, in swearing by the ensigns, and in preferring the ensigns before all the [other] gods.’ See what Havercamp says upon that place of Tertullian.” (25) “This declaring Titus imperator by the soldiers, upon such signal success, and the slaughter of such a vast number of enemies, was according to the usual practice of the Romans in like cases, as Reland assures us on this place.” See *Spurgeon*, p 215.

50 *Ibid*, § 2.

51 *Ibid*, §3.

turn back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Mt. 24:15-21.)

Luke records the Lord thusly:

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter there into. 22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Lk. 21:20-24.)

This destructionful filled Dan. 9:27 and 12:11. As soon as the believers saw the hated abomination (the Roman ensigns) of desolation (the Roman army was going to make Jerusalem desolate with her armies of desolation, Lk. 21:20), stand in the holy place, they knew the time to flee for their lives had arrived. The believers heeded our Lord's warnings here, and fled to the mountain city of Pella in Perea, and were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the Jews (C.H.S.). There is no evidence that a single Christian perished in Jerusalem. (Barnes')

Let us note that all of Jerusalem was considered holy. (Mt. 4:5.) Therefore, as soon as they saw the ensign of the Roman armies move inside the city, it was time to flee. (See Mk. 13:14.) The uncontrolled fury of the Roman soldiers really started at the burning of the temple. At that point, it would have been too late to flee. Actually, our Lord told believers to flee as soon as they saw their beloved city surrounded by armies. (Lk. 21:20.)

Vv. 16-18

Matthew 24:16-18, tell of the necessity of speedy flight—they could not take time for anything except flight. In the Lord's warning, we also see the importance of not becoming attached to the things of this world. (Cf. Mk. 9:47.)

Warnings

We also see here that God always gives a warning to those who are in the path of destruction. He cannot force them to flee, but if they have any perception at all, they will listen and act. (Cf. Amos 3:1-8.) How many folks do we know who are warned by word of God as clearly as our Lord warns here, yet they press ahead anyway.

Proverbs 27:12, tells us that the prudent foresee evil, and prepare accordingly. Here we see that those who love God and desire to obey him can have his protection in the evil day of his judgment against sin. Even our day of evil men, we can rest assured that judgment will come from God against this evil generation (world-wide). Here is a principle that says we can expect God's protection in the judgment. Maybe we will lose everything as did these Christians who fled, yet they were preserved to rebuild in the vacuum which was left when Judaism was destroyed.

Verses 20, *But pray ye...* There was no way to avoid the judgment of God against sin but here is an exhortation to pray concerning that judgment. Pray that the judgment will come in a time which will be conducive to flight. Really, those who believed him would flee any time, cold or warm. Those who did not, would not flee, so the circumstances would make no difference.

Here we see encouragement to pray for good (as good as can be expected) circumstances for those who want to obey God in the fierce day of his wrath.

Verses 21-22. The context demands that these two verses be left here in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. The crowd had cried out to Pilate, *His blood be on us, and on our children.* (Mt. 27:25.) It was. The Father pours out the veils of his stored up wrath upon this wicked nation that killed his only begotten Son. All of the parables from Matthew 21 have lead up to this point. (Rev. 18:20-24.)

Luke (21:24) tells us specifically what will happen: 1) They shall fall by the edge of the sword. 2) They shall be led away captive into all nations. 3) Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. These three things are easily traced in history.

The Time of the Gentiles:

That is, until the time allotted for the Gentiles to do it shall be fully accomplished, or as long as God is pleased to suffer them to do it.⁵²

In other words, the *times of the Gentiles* was the length of time allotted by the Father for Rome's army to destroy the Jewish nation. When his vengeance against the murderers was full, the time was up, and he said, "That's enough." (V. 22.)

The destruction of the Jewish nation took place during the Jewish Passover when all Jewish males were required to be in Jerusalem. It is estimated that more than three million were usually assembled at this time. Josephus records the number of Jews slain, and records the significant date of the final destruction of Jerusalem:⁵³

The whole multitude of the Jews that were destroyed during the entire seven years before this time, in all the countries of and bordering on Judea, is summed up by Archbishop Usher, from Lipsius, out of Josephus, at the year of Christ 70, and amounts to 1,337,490. (Eleven hundred thousand just during the fall of Jerusalem, ed.) Nor could there have been that number of Jews in Jerusalem to be destroyed in this siege, as will be presently set down by Josephus, but that both Jews and proslaves of justice were just then come up out of the other countries of Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Perca and other remote regions, to the Passover, in vast numbers, and therein cooped up, as in a prison, by the Roman army, as Josephus himself well observes in this and the next section, and as is exactly related elsewhere, B. V. ch. 3. sect. 1 and ch. 13. sect. 7.⁵⁴

Observe: The first preachers covered the then known world with the gospel of the finished work of Christ, before 70 AD. (See Mt. 24:14 above.) The gospel meant that all the old Jewish rights and rituals, or ordinances, were done away with in Christ. (Eph. 2, Col. 2.) When the preachers went into a new area, they went first to the Jewish synagogues where they found ready-made congregations who wanted to know about the God of the Old Testament. Some times the message of Christ's finished work was received, but often it was not. The world had been warned, and the gospel offered. Therefore, those from around the world who knew about and rejected the Christian Passover (1 Cor. 5:7, Heb. 11:28) for the old Passover were in Jerusalem when Rome shut it up. Their national rejection was judged by God, but not until after giving them a chance to repent. (See Mt. 24:16-18 above.)

The translator ends Book VI with his astonishment of how clearly Jerusalem's destruction fulfilled Matthew 24; he is so impressed that he wrote *Lit eral Ac com plish ment of Scrip ture Prop he cies*, which he commended to all serious inquirers:

This is the proper place for such as have closely attended to these latter books of the War to peruse, and that with equal attention, those distinct and plain predictions of Jesus of Nazareth, in the Gospels thereto relating, as compared with their exact completions in Josephus's history; upon which completions, as Dr. Whitby well observes, Annot. on Matthew 24:2, no small part of the evidence for the truth of the Christian religion does depend; and as I have step by step compared them together in my *Lit eral Ac com plish ment of Scrip ture Prop he cies*. The reader is to observe further, that the true reason why I have so seldom taken notice of those completions in the course of these notes, notwithstanding their being so very remarkable, and frequently so very obvious, is this, that I had entirely prevented myself in that treatise beforehand; to which therefore I must here, once for all, seriously refer every inquisitive reader. Besides these five here enumerated, who had taken Jerusalem of old, Josephus, upon further recollection, reckons a sixth, Antiq. B. XII. ch. 1. sect. 1, who should have been here inserted in the second place; I mean Ptolemy, the son of La gus.⁵⁵

A foot note in *Wars*, Book VII, Chapter 1, says:

This Tereutius Rufus, as Re land in part observes here, is the same person whom the Tal mudists call Turnus Rufus; of whom they relate, that "he ploughed up Sion as a field, and made Jerusalem become as heaps, and the

⁵² Barnes'

⁵³ *Wars*, Book VI, Chapter 9, Chapter 10 respectively.

⁵⁴ *Wars*, Book VI, Chapter 9, § 3, note 32. See App. E for extensive quotes from Josephus.

⁵⁵ *Wars*, Book VI, Chapter 10, § 1, note 34.

mountain of the house as the high Idaces of a forest;” which was long before fore told by the prophet Micah, ch. 3:12, and quoted from him in the prophecies of Jeremiah, ch. 26:18.

The Lord spent the last several days pleading with Israel, the *builders*, to believe him. He prophesied precisely what would happen to the nation of Israel if it did not repent—*Great Tribulation*, a tribulation unequalled in human history. The *builders* rejected the Lord’s offer, ignored his warnings and killed the son. They said, “Let his blood be upon us and upon our children,” and it was in the most horrible manner imaginable.

Jews Crucified

Josephus points out that the men of the city were crucified by being nailed to crosses. The vengeance of God is completed as the leaders of Israel nailed His only Son to a cross. I think it is quite amazing. Old Testament Israel’s *builders* used Rome to nail the Son to the tree, so God uses Rome to nail them to the *trees*.⁵⁶

Hunger

Though the leaders of the revolt, John and Simon, had enough food stored for many years, it was burned one night in a drunken fight among themselves—a civil war.⁵⁷

The hunger during the siege was beyond anything known as women eat their own children, as fore told by Moses, Deuteronomy 28:49-68. (See Rev. 6:6.) Moses warned of the swiftly flying eagle, v. 49. The *builders* who lead the revolt knew Scripture. However, though the Roman eagle surrounded their city, their hardness in rebellion prevented their connection of what they were doing with what was now taking place around them. Note that fallen man very seldom, if ever, connects the judgments against his sins with his difficult circumstances. Only the grace of God opens eyes, so the connection can be *made*.⁵⁸

or sold into Egypt for their punishment, Deuteronomy 28:68; Jeremiah 44:7; Hosea 8:13; 9:3; 9:4, 5; 2 Samuel 15:10-13; with Authentic Records, Part I. p. 49, 121; and *Re Land Pain est And*, tom. II. p. 715." Wars, Book VI, Chapter 9, § 2, note 31.

Un less the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that built it. The horse can be prepared unto battle, but safety is of the Lord.

Fire and Blood

The fire was so great that it looked like the hill itself was on fire, and the blood ran so deep that many fires were extinguished. The regular means used by Rome to kill the Jews was slitting their throats, causing the people to bleed to death. Modern warfare is “bloodless,” so it is difficult for us to imagine the amount of blood that would flow from over a million slit throats. The depth of the blood in the city was in deed an amazing fulfillment of Revelation 6:10, 8:7, 8, 14:20, 16:1-6, 18:11-24, 19:2. God himself required the shed blood of all the righteous people of all time, from Abel to Zacharias, and he used Rome to extract that blood (Mt. 23:34-39):

As for the seditions, they were in too great distress already to afford their assistance [to wards quenching the fire]; they were every where slain, and every where beaten; and as for a great part of the people, they were weak and without arms, and had their throats cut wherever they were caught. Now round about the altar lay dead bodies heaped one upon another, as at the steps (16) going up to it ran a great quantity of their blood, whither also the dead bodies that were slain above [on the altar] fell down.⁵⁹

Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of those bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Wars, Book V, Chapter 11, § 1. App. E.

⁵⁷ Wars, Book V, Chapter 1, § 4.

⁵⁸ Wars, Book VI, Chapter III, § 3, 4. App. E. “See the several predictions that the Jews, if they became obstinate in their idolatry and wickedness, should be sent again

⁵⁹ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 4, § 6. See also, Book VI, Chapter 5, § 1; Chapter 4, § 6, Chapter 8, § 5. App. E.

⁶⁰ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 5, § 1.

But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree in deed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood. And truly so it happened, that though the slayers left off at the evening, yet did the fire greatly prevail in the night; and as all was burning, came that eighth day of the month Gorpheus [Elul] upon Jerusalem, a city that had been liable to so many miseries during this siege, that, had it always enjoyed as much happiness from its first foundation, it would certainly have been the envy of the world. Nor did it on any other account so much deserve these sore misfortunes, as by producing such a generation of men as were the occasions of this its overthrow.⁶¹

Reading the account of Rome moving into the city and then into the temple and the slaying of hundreds of thousands of people, one can not help but be amazed at the hardness of the leaders of the rebellion. Time and again, they were confronted with defeat, but each defeat only hardened them in their rebellion. Both Titus and Caesar, who personally oversaw the war and directed some of the engagements, offered several times to let the Jews go free if they would only lay down their arms. Every offer was met more resistance, despite the sure defeat. In fact, at the first, Rome offered safety to any deserters, so the zealots laid wait and killed all deserters they could catch.⁶²

Hiding Under Rocks

Josephus tells us several times that many Jews, especially their leaders, unsuccessfully sought to hide from the Romans in subterranean caverns (see Rev. 6:16, 16:9, ch. 17, 18):

4. Now this vast multitude is in deed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly, the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world; for, to speak only of what was publicly known, the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made a search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with.⁶³

It is hard to imagine, but Titus and the Roman soldiers grew weary of killing people.

Yet could not that garri son resist those that were deserting; for although a great number of them were slain, yet were the deserters many more in number. These were all received by the Romans, because Titus himself grew negligent as to his former orders for killing them, and because the very soldiers grew weary of killing them, and because they hoped to get some money by sparing them; for they left only the populace, and sold the rest of the multitude, with their wives and children, and every one of them at a very low price, and that because such as were sold were very many, and the buyers very few; and although Titus had made proclamation beforehand, that no deserter should come alone by himself, that so they might bring out their families with them, yet did he receive such as these also. However, he set over them such as were to distinguish some from others, in order to see if any of them deserved to be punished; and in deed the number of those that were sold was immense; but of the populace above forty thousand were saved, whom Caesar let go whither every one of them please.⁶⁴

Prophecies Fulfilled

Deuteronomy 28:68.

This innumerable multitude of Jews that were "sold" by the Romans was an eminent completion of God's ancient threatening by Moses, that if they apostatized from the obedience to his laws, they should be "sold unto their enemies for bond-men and bond-women," Deuteronomy 28:68. See more especially the note on ch. 9, sect. 2. But one thing is here peculiarly remarkable, that Moses adds, Though they should be "sold" for slaves, yet "no man should buy them;" i.e. either they should have none to redeem them from this sale into slavery; or rather, that the slaves to be sold should be more than were the purchasers for them, and so they should be sold for little or nothing; which is what Josephus here affirms to have been the case at this time.⁶⁵

Not only was the slave market glutted, but the gold spoil taken from the temple glutted the market, cutting the price in half.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Wars, Book 6, Chapter 8, § 5.

⁶² Wars, Book VI, Chapter 3, § 3, Chapter 4, § 2, Chapter 6, § 3, etc.

⁶³ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 9, § 4.

⁶⁴ Book VI, Chapter 8, § 2.

⁶⁵ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 8, § 2, note. Titus sent captives to his friends to be destroyed in theaters, and sent captives to the Egyptian mines.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Chapter 9, § 2.

⁶⁶ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 6, § 1.

Matthew 24:2

This is the proper place for such as have closely attended to these latter books of the War to perseuse, and that with equal attention, those distinct and plain predictions of Jesus of Nazareth, in the Gospels thereto relating, as compared with their exact completions in Josephus's history; upon which completions, as Dr: Whitby well observes, Annot. on Mat thew 24:2, no small part of the evidence for the truth of the Christian religion does depend; and as I have step by step compared them together in my Literal Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies. The reader is to observe further, that the true reason why I have so seldom taken notice of those completions in the course of these notes, not withstanding their being so very remarkable, and frequently so very obvious, is this, that I had entirely prevented myself in that treatise beforehand; to which therefore I must here, once for all, seriously refer every inquisitive reader. Besides these five here enumerated, who had taken Jerusalem of old, Josephus, upon further recollection, reckons a sixth, Antiq. B. XII. ch. 1. sect. 1, who should have been here inserted in the second place; I mean Ptolemy, the son of La gus.⁶⁷

Jere miah 26:18, Mi cah 3:12

This Tereutius Rufus, as Re land in part observes here, is the same person whom the Tal mudists call Tur nus Rufus; of whom they relate, that "he ploughed up Sion as a field, and made Jerusalem become as heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high Idaces of a forest;" which was long before fore told by the prophet Mi cah, ch. 3:12, and quoted from him in the prophecies of Jere miah, ch. 26:18.⁶⁸

God Empowered Rome

Titus himself said that God was the one who overthrew the Jews, and ejected them from their strong holds. Rome was not strong enough to get through the walls, nor take the towers: "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men or any machines do to wards overthrowing these towers?"⁶⁹ Titus was a pagan, so he could well have been referring to his pagan gods. Regardless, he knew it was a supernatural power that allowed him to take the city and the temple. Josephus said,

And now, "O most wretched city, what misery so great as this didst thou suffer from the Romans, when they came to purify thee from thy iniquities! 'For thou couldst be no longer a place fit for God, nor couldst thou long continue in being, after thou hadst been a sepulcher for the bodies of thy own people, and hadst made the holy house itself a burying-place in this civil war of thine. Yet mayst thou again grow better, if perchance thou wilt hereafter appease the anger of that God who is the author of thy destruction.'" But I must restrain myself from these passions by the rules of history, since this is not a proper time for dramatic lamentations, but for historical narrations; I therefore return to the operations that follow in this sedition.⁷⁰

Many who tried to flee the doomed city swallowed pieces of gold to try to get it past the Roman army. By chance, this was discovered, and from then on, any deserter caught had his stomach cut open and the gold removed. So much gold was found this way that the price of gold dropped over 50% in the Roman camp. The city was exceedingly rich, yet because of its rebellion, all that wealth was worthless. Considering this activity utterly repulsive, Titus sought to stop his army from cutting open the deserters. This is what Josephus said of the situation—"but in reality it was God who condemned the whole nation, and turned every course that was taken for their preservation to their destruction."⁷¹

God Punishes Wicked Men

So the city that made all the earthy rich with her woredoms fell because she refused to glorify God as God. All that is left of this old nation is the Jewish religion, but that religion is no longer the threat to the church that it was before 70 A.D. We learn from the Jewish/Roman war that God will judge sin. Though the judgment may be slow in coming, it will come; the longer it waits, the worse it is. In Josephus' words, "...God punishes wicked men."⁷²

67 Wars, Book VI, § 1, note.

68 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 2, § 1, note.

69 Wars, Book 6, Chapter 9, § 1, etc.

70 Wars, Book 5, Chapter 1, § 3.

71 Wars, Book V, Chapter 13, § 4.

72 Wars, Book VII, Chapter 11, § 4.

Point after point from history argues that The Revelation prepared the Apostolic Jewish Church for the destruction of the 1500 year old Jewish economy that had been established by God himself. Accordingly, The Revelation was basically fulfilled up to Chapter 20. However, as long as there are sinful men, attempts will be made and devices implemented against the Lord and against his anointed, just as the wicked Jews did. The Law of the Lord established in Revelation chapters 1-19 is quite clear and will stand for ever—that is, “...God punishes wicked men.” God judges sin, so let us kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

God’s army, led by Titus, cast down every stone of the city that crucified our Lord, and plowed it as a field. Divine Providence fulfilled Micah 3:12 (Jer. 26:18):

There fore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Je ru sa lem shall be come heaps, and the moun tain of the house as the high places of the for est.

Though it is difficult for us to imagine the totality of the destruction of Jerusalem, that great and exceedingly rich city became a heap of stones in the midst of a field plowed up by Tur nus Rufus, as promised by our Lord. (Mt. 22:7.) There is not one word of Divine Scripture which will not be fulfilled. (Modern Jerusalem revered so much by Christians is built on top of the heap of stones left by the Roman legions. The “streets where Christ walked” are many feet below the present streets in modern Jerusalem.)

Chapter XVI

Conclusion

The Apostolic church was predominantly Jewish. The many thousands converted to Christ in the first century, e.g., the Book of Acts, were primarily converted from Judaism. Judaism had been established by God through Moses and practiced in the temple. Accordingly, the Jewish religion was a serious threat to the new church—the new Christian converts were easily influenced to either return to the Jewish rituals that had pointed to Christ, or mix them with faith in Christ. Paul dealt with the Judaizers in all of his letters. (See Eph. 2 and Col. 2.)

Shortened Days

Mat thew 24:22. Reading Josephus’ account of the Jewish/Roman war, we can easily see the hatred Rome had toward the Jews. The war had repercussions: The “Jewish nation [was, ed.] widely dispersed over all the habitable earth,” and the peoples of those nations reacted to Rome’s victory by seeking to persecute and even kill Jews everywhere, e.g.,

2. It happened also about this time, that the Jews who remained at Antioch were under accusations, and in danger of perishing, from the disturbances that were raised against them by the Antiochians; and this both on account of the slanders spread abroad at this time against them, and on account of what pranks they had played not long before; which I am obliged to describe without fail, though briefly, that I may the better connect my narration of future actions with those that went before... 4. So the Jews were under great disorder and terror, in the uncertain expectations of what would be the upshot of these accusations against them.⁷³

Shortly after Titus’ victory, he made a triumphal entry into Antioch. The people of Antioch requested Titus to banish all Jews from them, a request he refused: “Where upon the people of Antioch, when they had failed of success in this their first request, made him a second; for they desired that he would order those tables of brass to be removed on which the Jews’ privileges were engraven. However, Titus would not grant that neither, but permitted the Jews of Antioch to continue to enjoy the very same privileges in that city which they had before...”⁷⁴

⁷³ Wars, Book 7, Chapter 3, § 2, 3, 4.

⁷⁴ Wars, Book 7, Chapter 5, § 2.

The new church was Jew ish, so if the Lord had per mit ted the Jews to be de stroyed, the foun da tion of the church would have been de stroyed. So *for the elects sake those days* were short ened. God pro tects his faith ful peo ple, even as he ful fills his prom ised judg ment and wrath again sin.

V. 23. We have dis cussed this a lit tle, and quoted Jo se phus' above, so let it suf fice here to say this—the Jews to tally ex pected the Christ (Mes siah) to de liver them from Ro man op pres sion, e ven to the very last of the siege of Je ru sa lem. The false teach ers who wanted to stand against Rome used the prom ise of the soon com ing Mes siah (Christ) to de liver them from Rome to really their troops against Rome. They died look ing for their false hope. The zeal ots who led in the in sur rec tion never gave up the false hope even af ter Je ru sa lem was com pletely raised to the ground, many hun dreds of thou sands of peo ple killed by the sword and fam ine, and they were in cap tiv ity as a sign of Rome's strength.⁷⁵ Re bel lion hard ens peo ple to what is tak ing place around them.

V. 24. Again we have a reference to false claims of deliverance from the Romans. The false proph ets had great signs and won ders; they did mar vel ous things to try to con vince oth ers to fol low them and hold out in their re bel lion against Rome. They did their best to get the mul ti tudes to fol low them in their rebellion. Their message sounded and looked so real that only the preserving grace of God could pro tect his peo ple from it.

Their message was, “Stay and de fend Je ru sa lem. The Mes siah will soon be here. He will de liver us and make us the rul ers over Rome.” Those who were not *the elect* stayed. Those who were the elect knew that Christ (the Mes siah) had al ready come; there fore, they fled.

Vv. 25- 28. Christ tells his fol low ers forty years be fore it ac tu ally hap pened, “Be hold, I have told you be fore what is go ing to hap pen. There will be an abun dance of false proph ets claim ing that the Christ is here or there. They will do this to try to get you to join in their re bel lion against God. I have told you be fore hand. Don't you be lieve them.”

V. 27. The com ing of the Son of man will be from an un ex pected quar ter. No more than you can tell from where the light ning will strike will you be able to tell from where he will come.

V. 28. After Christ, Ju da ism be came only a dead and cor rupt *carcase*, fit only for the Ro man eagle. Christ warned that those who clung to the *carcase* would be “meat” for that eagle, and they were. With eleven hundred thousand people in the city to calibrate the “feast of unleavened bread,” *i.e.*, the Passo ver, the gates were sud denly shut up by an army. They would not have been caught there by Rome if they had aban doned the feast, which was now only a dead and cor rupt *car case*.⁷⁶

All the peo ple pres ent in the city had heard the gos pel, for it had al ready spread world- wide, be ing preached primary in the synagogues. Those who were in the synagogues, heard and re jected the mes sage of Christ, in clud ing many Greek prose lytes,⁷⁷ were, ac cord ingly, the ones who were at Jerusalem to cali brate the old re quired Passo ver.

Christ said, “You will be able to tell when and where the Son of man has re turned in judg ment against this wicked peo ple by where the ea gles will be gath ered to gether (the false proph ets sure won't tell you).” Rome gathered against Je ru sa lem un der the en sign of the eagle. The Jews did not expect the Son to return in judgment against them in the form of the Roman army. Yet Christ clearly tells his disciples that would be the case.

75 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 4, § 4. Josephus continually tells of the hardness of the Jews. Despite continual set backs that showed the city was going to fall, the zealots refused to quit. The leaders did not give up until Rome dug them out of their underground hiding *places*. *Ibid*, Chapter 6, § 3. Titus even offered peace, but the tyrants wanted it on their terms.

76 Wars, Book 6, Chapter 9, § 3. Note for § 3: “But what is here chiefly remarkable is this, that no foreign nation ever came thus to destroy the Jews at any of their solemn festivals, from the days of Moses till this time, but came now upon their apostasy from God, and from obedience to him. Nor is it possible, in the nature of things, that in any other nation such vast numbers should be gotten together, and perish in the siege of any one city whatsoever, as now happened in Jerusalem.”

77 Wars, Book 7, Chapter 3, § 3.

The End of the World

The de scrip tion of the judg ment against Je ru sa lem and of the end of the world (from an un ex pected place and in an un ex pected time) are very close to the same. We know that the Je ru sa lem part was ful filled, and some day the end of the world part will be ful filled.

Ju da ism had be come a “car cass,” dead and cor rupt; fit prey for the vul tures or carrion- kites of Rome. By- and- by, there will ar rive an other day, when there will be a dead church in a dead world, and “the ea gles” of di vine judg ment “will be gath ered to gether to tear in pieces those whom there shall be none to de liver.—”⁷⁸

When one tries to use Mat thew 24:24 to say that the elect of our day cannot be deceived, he must re move it from its con text. The con text is the elect be ing de ceived con cern ing the Messiah and the then soon com ing de struc tion of the wicked city. The New Tes ta ment abounds with pas sages tell ing of the de cep tion of the elect in all kinds of mat ters, e.g., 2 Pe ter 2:3, 2 Timo thy 3:13, 2 John 7, etc..

In con sid er ing Matt. 24:1-18 we need to keep in mind, Christ is prophe sy ing the near com ing de struc tion of that wicked city. The capi tal of the na tion that killed all of the right eous prophets from Abel and fi nally, killed the Son of God him self. The very last, the un known com ing of the Son in judg ment can ap ply else where. To try to use vv. 1-28 to build any other doc trine other than what he meant it for is in deed dan ger ous. We con demn oth ers for us ing pas sages apart from their con text, let us not do the same.

The rest of Matthew 24 clearly speaks of the second coming of Christ, except for vv. 32-35—here, “Our Lord evi dently re turns to the subject of the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, and in these words gives his apos tles warn ing con cern ing the signs of the times.”⁷⁹ He clearly tells them that vv. 1-28 will be ful filled within that pres ent gen era tion, just as sure as the tender (new) branches of the fig tree and his leaves meant that sum mer is night. We know that it was within the forty years generation that Ti tus took the capi tal city and raised it to the ground. Eve ry thing our Lord told these men was lit er ally ful filled. To say that these pas sages which he used to proph ecy a de struc tion yet to be ful filled is to use them to tally apart from what they were in tended by our Lord.

Our Lord mixed the an swers, leav ing this sec ond one very am bigu ous—all he said for sure is that the end shall come and come unex ceptedly.

V. 36 plainly con demns such things as “though we do not know the day and the hour of Christ’s com ing, we may know the year, the month, and even the week. If this is not blas phe mous it is cer tainly foolish.”⁸⁰

There are a great many prac ti cal les sons con tained in the con clu sion of Christ’s an swer to the dis ci ples ques tion of v. 3 (on the mount of Olives); the an swer ac tu ally runs to the end of chapter 25.

Since we are deal ing with some grossly mis used pas sages of our day (Mt. 24:1-28), we will leave the re main der of his mes sage from the mount of Olives for a lat ter time as he an swers the other ques tion put to him by his dis ci ples, v. 3, and of the end of the world.

Let us close with this:

“And thus was Je ru sa lem taken, in the sec ond day of the reign of Ves pa sin, on the eighth day of the month Gor pieus [Elul]. —” And thus was Je ru sa lem taken, in the sec ond year of the reign of Ves pa sin, on the eighth day of the month Gor pieus [Elul]. It had been taken five times be fore, though this was the sec ond time of its deso la tion; for Shishak, the king of Egypt, and af ter him Antio chus, and af ter him Pom pey, and af ter them So s ius and Herod took the city, but still pre served it and made it deso late, one thou sand four hun dred and sixty- eight years and six months af ter it was built. But he who first built it was a po tent man among the Ca naan ites, and is in our tongue called [Melchise ked], the Right eous King, for such he really was; on which ac count he was [there], and called the city Je ru sa lem, which was for merly called Sa lem. How ever, David the king of the Jews, ejected the Ca naan ites, and set tled his own peo ple therein. It was de mol ished en ti rely by the Baby lo ni ans, four hun dred and sev en ty- seven years; yet hath no its great an tiq uity, nor its vast riches, nor the dif fu sion of its na tion over all the hab it able earth, nor the

⁷⁸ Spurgeon.

⁷⁹ Spurgeon.

⁸⁰ Spurgeon.

greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed. And thus ended the siege of Jerusalem.⁸¹

Conclusion

It is quite obvious: Our Lord prophesied judgment upon those (the nation) which rejected the Son and killed him. This judgment was referred to as the *great tribulation*, and it was. Attempts to make this passage say something else is to put other words into our Lord's mouth. As we have seen, it was in fulfillment of the warning given from chapter 21 on.

God help us to read and understand Scripture as he gave it and as he meant it to be.

81 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 10, § 1.

Appendix A

On the time & purpose of the Book of the Revelation

I am not dog matic on these things. I was raised up a Dar byite, but as I searched the Scrip tures, I found that Dar by's doc trine just didn't fit to gether with the to tal con text of Scrip ture. I have one study on Mat thew 24 alone which cov ers 76 typed, sin gle spaced pages; an other 30 page study on the Sec ond Ad vent, and an other lengthy study in Isaiah. Though the fol low ing comes from Mat and Sec ond Ad vent study, it pri mar ily comes from the Isaiah study. I went verse by verse from 1 : 1, and the part from Isaiah is from P 24ff. in Isa 13. My pri mary source is Scrip ture.

The fol low ing is gleaned from many hun dreds of pages of re search, and is a brief over view from many hours of study over the past 12 years.

Introduction:

As an introductory statement, let me mention that prophecy is from the time it is written, NOT FROM THE TIME IT IS READ.

This makes the pur pose of The Reve la tion the same as was Isai ah's proph ecy. It was to see the faith ful peo ple of God through the ex tremely dif fi cult times ahead as their then known world was go ing to be shaken to its very foun da tion by the judg ment of God against Baby lon.

God clearly tells them that He had raised Baby lon up for a rea son. Af ter Baby lon has ac com plished God's pur pose, He brought her down.

The un der stand ing of this opens Reve la tion up tre men dously. In Reve la tion, the Lord Je sus Christ, who had just been put to death maybe 30 years pre vi ously, is pre sented to the church which He founded and left, as the risen Lord and King over all of crea tion, chap ter 1.

He is then pre sented as the all know ing Lord and King over the Seven ba sic churches, chap ters 2, 3. He knows all about them, and they are close to His heart even in the com ing judg ment. He tells them to get the sin in the church taken care of be cause there is this tre men dous judg ment on its way. He then tells of the great de struc tion which is about to come upon the cen ter of the known world for both the He brews and the new church, the Chris tians: the de struc tion of Je ru sa lemand the old es tab lished method of wor ship.

Re member, Je ru sa lem was the cen ter of the world, both for the now apos tate Jews and for the new church: both ob vi ously ex pected God's con tin ued care for the phys ical cen ter of wor ship, Je ru sa lem and the temple.

The Lord, through John, tells the new Chris tians - and Jews if they would lis ten - of the quickly ap proach ing judg ment against those who put Christ to death, the de struc tion of the wicked city, which was close at hand, even within a few years. He tells them this for the same rea son that Isaiah (and other proph ets) tells the faith ful of the fall of Baby lon, *i.e.* to show them that God is in to tal con trol, that noth ing is hap pen ing that He is not in charge of, and the re sult will be the glo ri ous ex al ta tion of the King dom of God. (We should not for get that the Lord Je sus told the high priest that Christ per son ally would re turn to judge him for his evil deed.)

In all of the terrible 'trembling' that is coming, it is God that has put it in the heart of the wicked to ac com plish His pro pose, Reve la tion 17:7.

The last chap ter of Reve la tion, 22, points out:

1. the time is very near for this judg ment spo ken of in Reve la tion to come.

2. the prophecy was not sealed (v.10). Therefore, it was for the immediate future, not 2000 years away. This is quite un like the proph ecy given to Dan iel, which could not be un der stood until the time was near, 12:4.

3. even after the judg ments de scribed in this Book are com plete, there are still un just peo ple in the world, Reve la tion 22:11, 15.

4. many times through out this Book, as well as through out the NT, the near ness of this com ing judg ment against Baby lon is noted, v. 20. This is un like the prophe cies of Isaiah that spoke of the future.

We do not find Isai ah's warn ing of the ful fill ment of the com ing judg ment against Baby lon being re ferred to as quickly com ing, and the de struc tion he fore told was only 170 or so years away. How could the Holy Spirit change His defini tion of *Quickly* from the Old Testament to the New Tes ta ment? In light of the TO, *quickly* can not be iden ti fied as a pe riod of an ex cess of 2000 years, as mod ern ex posi tors seek to make it.

An other point about the not seal ing of this book. The read ers of the pe riod un der stood that it would very soon come to pass, which it did within proba bly 10 years. Thus it was un sealed to them. They read and read ily un der stood what the Lord was tell ing them of in this Book.

The read ers of the pres ent, who are 2000 years away, have a dif fi cult time un der stand ing that it was to very soon come to pass upon the ones to whom it was ad dressed: it is, there fore, sealed to them, which is why there is such a huge amount of specu la tion from this book, in clud ing 3:20 being used as a sal va tion verse.

The churches men tioned in Reve la tion chap ters 2 & 3, had to be able to read this proph ecy and un der stand it be cause the great tribu la tion which Christ spoke of in Mat thew 24 was al most u pon them. No tice Christ's com pari son in Mat thew 24:29 with Isaiah 13:1-10. Christ clearly iden ti fies the time spo ken of by HIM SELF of the over throw of Je ru sa lem with the over throw of Baby lon as de scribed by both Isaiah and Jeremiah. Those who heard Him knew im mediately what He was talk ing about. They would have known the con text of Isaiah and the mean ing of these terms. There was no need to say any more, for it spoke so clearly of the whole of the de struc tion of the Baby lon of the Chal dees.

It is in ter est ing that those who in sist that this verse in Mat thew 24 (and simi lar verses in the Reve la tion) must be lit eral, do not in sist that the ex act same verse in Isaiah 13:10 [*For the stars of heaven and the con stel la tions thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be dark ened in his go ing forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.*] must be lit eral. It is this kind of Bi ble in ter pre ta tion that leads to the huge amount of false teach ing which we have all around us to day. If it is figu ra tive in one place, it must be figu ra tive in the other, un less we are clearly told differ ently by the con text.

No tice that Reve la tion 18:20 clearly speaks of Je ru sa lem, as does Mat thew 23:37. I must ad mit that most of the re form ers con sid ered the Baby lon of Reve la tion the city and church of Rome, but that un der stand ing does not fit into the con text of Mat thew 23:37. We should not for get the to tal ity of Je ru sa lem's de struc tion: Ti tus plowed the foun da tions of the walls with a yoke of oxen. What is seen over there to day is sev eral feet above the streets upon which Christ and the apos tles walked

These new Chris tians and the new church needed the strength to stand in the com ing hor ror. Noth ing had ever hap pened like this be fore, whereas to day tribu la tion against the church has hap pened many times since the first move against her. In fact, our Lord said that there had been and will be noth ing like it in the his tory of the world, v. 21. With this state ment to His hear ers, He iden ti fied the com ing fall of Je ru sa lem as far worse than even the fall of Baby lon of which Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke.

Which brings us back to Reve la tion 1:3 – the proph ecy was un sealed. Any child of God could read it and un der stand the warn ings, threats and prom ises con tained therein. Thus the prom ised

bles sing to all who read it. This prom ise was an en cour age ment for the peo ple of God to read this book. They had to in or der that they might be pre pared for what was soon to take place so they would not be shaken in their faith.

I must say that when Reve la tion is strained to cover some thing it does not, it closes its teach ings, it seals it self to those strain ing over its un der stand ing.

This en cour age ment was as much needed by the peo ple of God be fore this ter ri ble time spo ken of by our Lord in Mat thew 24, if not more so, as was the en cour age ment needed in Isai ah's time. With out the ex pla na tion of what was soon to take place, the peo ple of God would have been at wits end, think ing that the prom ises of God had failed.

That prom ise from the time of Abra ham on is for the ex al ta tion of the King and His King dom. The Mes siah was the per son i fi ca tion of this prom ise – every thing, every ful fill ment, all hinged upon the Mes siah, and He was go ing to be killed. To the nat u ral mind, Christ's mur der would make the spirit of re bel lion more pow er ful than the King. Re mem ber, even the Apos tles lost hope until the risen Lord ap peared to them on the sea shore. There fore, He is warn ing them, both in Mat thew 24 and in Reve la tion, that the re sult ing judg ment and over throw of the Baby lon which put the Son of God to death would be more vio lent than any thing since the foun da tion of the earth. There fore, they were not to lose hope in the prom ise of the ex al ta tion and vic tory of the King dom of God over the spirit of the world which put Him to death.

Isai ah and Jere miah pre pared the peo ple of God for the com ing de struc tion of Baby lon of the Chal dees and the glo ri ous King dom of God af ter it.

The prophet John (Reve la tion) pre pared the peo ple of God for the com ing de struc tion of the Baby lon of apos tate Is rael and the glo ri ous King dom of God af ter it. (Note the over all paral lel be tween the NT Baby lon and the TO Baby lon: It was not by mis take that the Lord calls the city which killed the Son Baby lon. Any one who read John's proph ecy back then would im me di ately iden tify what John was talk ing about. Remember these 7 churches would have been largely Jewish and would be very fa mil iar with both Isai ah and Jere miah, and their warn ing against Baby lon.

Though the pri mary pur pose of Reve la tion was to pre pare the new church for the then soon com ing de struc tion of Je ru sa lem (which is seen from pas sages such as Reve la tion 18:20 when com pared with Mat thew 23:34), let me give 5 points:

1. keep in mind that even though much of the book spoke of the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, and was ful filled when that took place, it is not all ful filled. It con tin ues to de scribe the con flict be tween the forces of the an ti Chris tian spirit and the king dom of God.

It holds for us the same prom ise as it did for the first church, the prom ise of the ul ti mate vic tory of the King and His king dom, no mat ter how vic to ri ous the pow ers of dark ness ap pear to be.

2. This con flict will con tinue un til Reve la tion 20:10-15 is ful filled. Ob vi ously it has not been.

3. Note that the next chap ter, ch. 21 starts with *And*. That does not nec es sar ily mean that this is the next event. All John does here is tell what he saw next, not nec es sar ily the order in which they were to take place. This also is ob vi ous in other places of this Book.

In fact, the con text re quires this view be cause there is still sin pres ent in chap ter 21, 22. To make it even more dif fi cult is 22:3, *no more curse*, yet in v. 11 sin is still present.

4. I have not done word stud ies in this book like I have in sev eral oth ers. Some one men tioned the pas sage in Reve la tion 18:10, 17, 19 and the word *hour*. What will we do with this word in its con text. When I looked at it, I knew what I felt it re ferred to, but I was not sure. I checked sev eral ideas, none of which worked out. Then as a last re sort, which I should have done first, I searched the word out, which gives us an in ter est ing fact.

This ex act word - *hour* - is only used 5 other times in the New Tes ta ment – John 5:35, 2 Cor in thi ans 7:8, Ga la ti ans 2:5, Phi le mon 15 and 1 The sa lo ni ans 2:17. In every case, ex cept in Reve la-

tion, it is translated as a *season*. It right fully means ‘a very short time,’ and is not re fer ring to a fixed time, e.g., one hour as we would think of it – 60 min.

5. And one more point. Even though I am giv ing you some things to think and talk about, I do not have the answers. Nor does anyone. I have not done a study in Revelation itself, nor have I found any good books in this area since I had to give up Scofield ism. All I really have is bits and pieces which I have gath ered from other pas sages. The more I study in other ar eas, the more of t he pieces fall to gether in this Book of Reve la tion. I am cov er ing some of these bits and pieces here with you.

The Apos tles Creed (dated by the Church his to rian, Schaff, as early as 100 AD.) con tains the ear li est of Church state ments about the Sec ond Ad vent: it rules out any pre mil len nial ad vent of Christ which holds for two res ur rec tions;

1. the first con sist ing of only the right eous (sup posed to be taught in Rev.20:4, 5);

2. the sec ond con sist ing of both the right eous and the wicked at the end of the world, sup posedly taught in Mat thew 25:31- 46. This also teaches a space of a thou sand years be tween the two, with Christ reigning bod ily on a re mod eled earth.

This doc trine was the re vival of a Jew ish doc trine of the Mes si anic king dom, which was formed in the later period of Jew ish his tory by cor rupted study of the Old Tes ta ment. It flour ished the most be tween A.D. 150 and 250, and its pres ence in the Church at that time has been ex ag ger ated.

James Hast ings, in his *Dictionary of Religion* (1924), says, “In pre sent ing the NT doc trine of the King dom of God we should no tice (1) *the pre va lent ex pec ta tion* of the Mes siah at the time Je sus was born. There was no ex act uni form ity of be lief or of ex pec ta tion. some en thu si asts looked for a war- like chief tain, gifted with an abil ity of lead er ship, to cast off the Ro man yoke and re store the king dom of Is rael to some such splen dour as it had in the days of Solo mon.”

This is also called the Fu tur ist view of the Reve la tion. This view in sisted that all of Reve la tion from chap ter 4 on was yet to be ful filled. This view was made popu lar by “Sixteenth- cen tury Ro man Catho lic com men ta tors [who] coun tered Prot est ant at tacks upon the pa pacy as the an ti christ by in sist ing that none of the events re lat ing to An ti christ had yet oc curred.” (Roots of Fundamen talism, pg. 37. Though these Prot est ants un der stood that Reve la tion was pri mar ily speak ing of the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, they also saw it as a rec ord of the on go ing con flict be tween the King dom of God and the forces of the Antichrist, led by the Pope.)

We saw from the Apos tles Creed that this think ing had no part in the early church, and was re jected, even though it was pres ent at the time this creed was put to gether. I am hav ing to do a study in the early church creeds and none men tioned a two- part com ing through 500 A.D.

As we are look ing at the *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, we also find that they held to only one gen eral res ur rec tion of the dead, not two res ur rec tions. (Ch. 31.)

Reve la tion 20:4-6 is the chief and nearly the sole sup port for this doc trine of two bod ily res ur rec tions. This is the rea son we took the amount of time that we did to de velop the time- frame of the Book. This is a key in a proper in ter pre ta tion of it. The pas sage in Reve la tion must be un der stood in the light of Mat thew 25 where the Lord Him self de scribes what is to take place at His sec ond Ad vent.

In or der for Reve la tion 20 and Mat thew to work to gether, “res ur rec tion” in Reve la tion needs to be un der stood in a spiri tual sense, and not a lit eral sense. No tice John’s use of the phrase “*I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judg ment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection.*”

Notice what John did not say. He did not say that he saw the bodies of them that were be headed. If John had meant that these peo ple were here as a re sult of a lit eral, bod ily res ur rec tion,

he would have said, "I saw the bod ies of them that were be headed." Surely, if he had meant lit eral bod ies reign ing with Christ, he would have said bod ies.

(As I have been study ing the Book of Isaiah, I have been struck with the con sis tent mis in ter pre ta tion of Scrip tures by C.I.Scofield. The pas sages where the con text de mands a lit eral un der stand ing, he gives a spiri tual mean ing. The pas sages where the con text re quires a spiri tual un der stand ing, he gives a lit eral. It is strange in deed. I would love to go into these pas sages some day. His proph etic specu la tion by this means has turned proph ecy and Chris ti an ity up side down. To ac cept his notes on many of these pas sages, must go con trary to mul ti tudes of com men ta tors. On the one pas sage alone in Isaiah 14, every com men ta tor and his to rian that I have went con trary to what he said [6 in all, not count ing the early church fa thers which I checked].)

John the Revelator, sees the martyrs and other witnesses for Christ as disembodied spirits dwell ing in para dise, and de scribes them not as hav ing been lit er ally raised from the dead at this time. He saw no bod ies, yet he saw them as "liv ing and reign ing" with Christ for a thou sand years. John calls this "living and reign ing" the "first res urrec tion."

They lived with Christ by their faith in Him, and this spiri tual life was a spiri tual res urrec tion from "death in tres passes and sins," Ephe si ans 2:1. Paul goes on to tell the be liev ers at Ephesus that hav ing been born again, they have been raised to sit with Christ, Ephesians 2:2-6.

Colossians 3:1-3 Having thus risen with Christ, they sought those things which are above where Christ sit teth on the right hand of God, and as the re ward of their great dedi ca tion to Him and His word, even to martyrdom (as we saw in Rev. 20), they now reign in the heavenly paradise with Christ in His spiri tual reign. They will then re turn with Him at the end of all things.

Dur ing this re mark able pe riod of time from His as cen sion to His Fa ther and onto His throne, Ephe si ans 1:20- 21, the Scrip tures speak of the tri umph of the gos pel upon earth af ter a pe riod of ap par ent de feat. This pe riod of tri umph is re ferred to as the mil len nium.

Matthew 19:28 was spoken to the Apos tles, and must be un der stood spiri tu ally, be cause the Sav iour speaks of the of the time pe riod as be ing the *regeneration*. The cross- refer ence in my World Bible is 2 Cor in thi ans 5:17.

We could not count the times that the New Tes ta ment authors use *resurrection* to speak of *re-generation*.

Our ba sic prin ci ple or teach ing on the two res urrec tions for the re deemed, the first spiri tual and the second literal, would be our Lord's words recorded in John 5:25-29.

We can not say that the spirit of Baby lon is now in opera tive since Je ru sa lem's de struc tion, for ob viously it is still much in opera tion. Reve la tion 22 points out that the dogs, sor cer ers, whore mongers, mur der ers, idola ters, and the ones who love and make a lie, are still very much in ac tion. But we must ad mit that the power that was be hind the spirit of Baby lon (Baby lon de fined as re bellion in all its shapes and forms, against the Lord and His Christ and the King dom of God) was most cer tainly bro ken. It was bro ken on the cross of Christ, Co los sians 1:13; 2:15. The spirit of Baby lon can only op er ate as the peo ple of God yield to him.

The spirit of Baby lon still lives. Thus, the Reve la tion give us a his tory of the con tin uing c on flict be tween the forces of re bel lion and the king dom of God. This Book holds the same prom ise to the faith ful chil dren of God of the days since the fall of Je ru sa lem as it did to the ones be fore the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem who it was pri mar ily ad dressed to. In the midst of this con flict, the Lord as sures His faith ful peo ple of His sov ereignty, His care and provision and the final vic tory of the king dom of God over the king dom of Baby lon, no matter how desperate the situation nor how strong Baby lon ap pears to be.

As we mentioned, Reve la tion 22:15 points out that the dogs, sor cer ers, whore mon gers, mur derers, idolaters, and the ones who love and make a lie, are still very much in action.

This is to say that the power which was be hind this spirit of Baby lon (Baby lon de fined as re bel lion in all its shapes and forms, against the Lord and His Christ and the King dom of God) was most cer tainly bro ken. It was bro ken on the cross of Christ, Co los sians 1:13; 2:15. The spirit of Baby lon can only op er ate as the peo ple of God yield to him: It is any move that re fuses to glo rify God as God and es pe cially a united move such as the UN, but not re stricted to the UN. It could eas ily in clude churches and even pa tri otic move ments. No mat ter how much this anit god and man as god might ap pear to pre vail, and op press the king dom of God, it's fait is sealed, the King will pre vail.

A word about 2 Thes sa lo ni ans 2 – the fol low ing is a quote, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, J.B. Payne, pg. 565.

"Dis pen sa tion al ism gen er ally af firms that the re straint must be the Holy Spirit of God, in the church, Scofield Ref er ence Bi ble, p. 1272, and that its be ing "taken out of the way" re fers to the rap ture of the church, prior to the law lessness of the great tribu la tion. The Thessa lo nian con text, how ever, sug gests noth ing about the Holy Spirit, or why such veiled lan guage should be used if He were the one meant. Though he may in deed do so, the Spirit is never men tioned in Scrip ture with the func tion of re strain ing law less ness; and vv. such as John 16:8, Eph. 6:18, or I John 4:4 can not be ad duced as strictly ger mane to such an ac tiv ity, though cf. the effort of J. F. Strom beck. First the Rap ture, pg. 101. Scrip ture, more over, gives no hint of the Holy Spir it's ever be ing re moved from the world—Strom beck's ci ta tion of Gen. 6:3, *ibid.*, pg. 102, mis in ter prets its refer ence to the ter mi na tion of life by the flood; cf. G. Vos, *Biblical The ology*, pp. 61-62. Mod ern dis pen sa tion al ists con cede that the Holy Spirit con tin ues in the world af ter the rap ture, con vict ing men of sin and judg ment, and open ing their hearts to the mes sage of sal va tion. Thus the only thing really re moved would be His pres ence as in dwell ing the church; cf. J. D. Pen te cost, *Things to Come*, pp. 262-263,

In other words, 2 Thes sa lo ni ans is in ter preted this way be cause it must be in ter preted this way to make the pre tribu la tion rap ture the ory work, even though they must make it say things that it does not say.

So, this leaves us with an un resolved pas sage in 2 Thes sa lo ni ans 2. What will we do with it?

The best ex pla na tion of this chap ter that I have come ac cost and the clos est to the con text of Scrip ture is put forth by a bril liant scholar named B.B. War field. The was pro fes sor of Di dactic and Po lemic The ology in the Theo logi cal Semi nary of Prince ton from 1887- 1921. In his book, *Biblical and The ological Studies*, he has a chap ter on the prophe cies of St. Paul. I would love to give you his whole line of think ing on this, but I will not. I will pro vide you with a copy of this chap ter if you like.

In dis cuss ing the reve la tion of the Man of Sin of chap ter 2, this is what he says:

In a word, this state ment only de clares of the Man of Sin what was just be fore de clared of the lesser ene mies of the Gos pel, and what was in I Thess. v.3 *seq.* de clared of all to whom wrath is ap pointed—that he shall meet with de struc tion at the Sec ond Com ing of the Lord. The reve la tion of the Man of Sin is not, then, nec es sar ily to be sought at the end of time: we know of it, only that it will suc ceed the re moval of the "re straint," and pre cede, by how much we are not told, the coming of the Lord.

After a page of ar gu ments and based on the pas sage in Daniel 11:36, he then iden ti fies the Man of Sin with the Roman emperor. And not necessarily a single emperor, but the line of emperors which em bod ied the per se cut ing power. He re minds us that the em per ors of Rome claimed dei fic a tion as gods and de manded wor ship as such. I must, how ever and based upon Reve la tion 13:18, hold that the man of sin had to be a sin gle man, and he was known by those to whom Paul wrote.

As we study Church his tory from Christ on, we find that it was only the em per ors of Rome who claimed to be di vine, gods on earth. They de manded wor ship as such, and per se cuted any and all who re fused to give them this wor ship. The em per or Con sitine in 313 A.D. is the one who put a stop to this. We have not had this think ing since. What de vel oped from Con sitine is the Church of Rome which with its pope, cal med to be God's rep re sen ta tive on earth. The bat tle then be came over who

was the rep re sen ta tive of God, the Church of Rome or the state. Both claimed to be equal with God, not God as the Em per ors did. (The King James Bi ble trans la tors con sid ered the of fice of the Roman Pope *that Man of Sin*. Are they wrong? See the dedication statement “TO THE MOST HIGH AND MIGHTY PRINCE, JAMES..” Maybe a reason for the many “translations” on the mar ket to day is to pro tect *that Man of Sin*.)

According to War field,

It was Nero, then, the first per se cu tor of the Church, -and Ves pa sian the miracle- worker, -and Ti tus, who in tro duced his di vine- self and his idola trous in sig nia into the Holy of Ho lies, per haps with a di rectly anti- Christian in tent, -and Domi tian, -and the whole line of hu man mon sters whom the world was wor ship ping as gods, on which, as a nerve- cord of evil, these hide ous gan glia gath ered, -these and such as these it was that Paul had in mind when he penned this hide ous de scrip tion of the son of per di tion, every item of which was ful filled in the ter ri ble story of the em per ors of Rome.

Thus, it was the Jew ish state that was the re strain ing power. As long as Ju da ism ex isted, it pro tected the de vel op ing new, young and weak Church from Rome. Ju da ism had fought for the right to ex ist, and as the new church de vel oped, it was mis taken for Ju da ism by Rome, oth er wise it would have been de clared an il le gal re lig ion. And it was per se cuted as an il le gal re lig ion as soon as Rome found out that Chris ti an ity was not Ju da ism. This pro tec tion was left in place by God un til the new Church was strong enough to stand on its own.

Also, dur ing this time, the door of sal va tion was kept open to the Jews un til the elect of the Jews were brought into the Body of Christ.

If the re strainer of v. 7 must be iden ti fied as a per son, which War field doubts, he iden ti fies him as James of Je ru sa lem, “God’s cho sen in stru ment in keep ing the door of Chris ti an ity open for the Jews and by so doing con tin u ing and com plet ing their proba tion.

2 The sa lo ni ans 2:8, Ju da ism is re moved by Rome, al low ing the Wicked one to move against the church in all of his fury. And he does as the Chris tians re fuse to hon our the em per ors of Rome as gods on earth. The furry lasted for 300 years.

War field goes on to iden tify the apos tasy or fal ling away re ferred to in v.3 as the great apos tasy of the Jews, which gradu ally filled up over the years. The wrath of God is hang ing over them like a storm cloud ready to burst forth in over whelm ing fury. The pres ence of God de parts from the tem ple, which is now an apos tate tem ple, and turns the city over to the Ro man le gions in the war with Rome, around 70 A.D.

Thus, with this prophetic pas sage in The sa lo ni ans, Paul was pre par ing the Church for the de struc tion of their pro tec tor, Ju da ism. He tells them why this is go ing to take place, the Jew’s apos tasy is full. He warns them of the new Chur ch’s soon com ing ex poser to the per se cut ing sword of the Cae sars of Rome who con sid ered them selves gods on earth, and killed all who re fused to ac know ledge this. We have a rec ord of many such slay ings, one of the bet ter known, the mar tyr dom of Policarp.

This ter ri ble per se cu tion against any and all who re fused to rec og nize Cae sar as di vine, lasted un til the con ver sion of Con sitine in 313 AD. Paul him self felt the sharp sword of the Di vine Cae sars. And in War field’s words, “all the proph ecy had been ful filled be fore two dec ades had passed away.”

Let me close this with Warfield’s conclusion.

“Let us gather up for the close, in brief re ca pi tu la tion, the events which Paul pre dicts in these two Epis tles. First of all, and most per sis tent ly of all, he pre dicts the com ing of the Lord from heaven unto judg ment, with its glo ri ous ac com pa ni ments of hosts of an gels, the shout, the voice of the arch an gel and the blast of the trum pet of God that awake the dead. Thus, he pre dicts the res ur rec tion of Christ’s dead to par take in the glory of His com ing. Then, he fore tells the re sults of the judg ment- eternal de struc tion from the face of God for the wicked, and ever last ing pres ence with the Lord for His own. Of the time of the Ad vent the Apos tle pro fesses ig no rance; he only knows that it will

come un ex pect edly. But he does know that be fore it the apos tasy of the Jews must be com pleted, and the per se cut ing power of the Ro man state be re vealed. This apos tasy and its pun ish ment he sees is im me di ately ready for com pletion (I Thess. ii. 16). Finally, he mentions having previously foretold the persecutions under which the Thes sa lo ni ans were al ready suffer ing (I Thess. iii. 4).”

I be lieve there are a few more points that re quire Reve la tion’s date to be be fore 70 AD. Mat thew 10:23, Christ prom ised He would re turn be fore all the cit ies of Is rael were cov ered with the mes sage of the King dom of God.

Mt 16:28* Ver ily I say unto you, There be some stand ing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man com ing in his king dom. Mt 24:27* For as the light ning com eth out of the east, and shi neth even unto the west; so shall also the com ing of the Son of man be. Mt 24:30* And then shall ap pear 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 com ing in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Mt 24:48* But and if that evil ser vant shall say in his heart, My lord de lay eth his com ing; Mt 25:13* Watch there fore, for ye know nei ther the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man com eth. Mt 26:64* Je sus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nev er the less I say unto you, Here af ter shall ye see the Son of man sit ting on the right hand of power, and com ing in the clouds of heaven. Mr 13:26* And then shall they see the Son of man com ing in the clouds with great power and glory. Lu 18:8* I tell you that he will avenge them speed ily. Nev er the less when the Son of man com eth, shall he find faith on the earth? Lu 21:27* And then shall they see the Son of man com ing in a cloud with power and great glory.

Mat 10:23, Gill, [a Par ticu lar Bap tist who preached in CHS’s pul pit 100 years be fore CHS, writ ing in the early 1700s] *till the son of man be come*; which is not to be un der stood of his sec ond com ing to judg ment, but ei ther of his res ur rec tion from the dead, when he was de clared to be the son of God, and when his glo ri fi ca tion be gan; or of the pour ing forth of the spirit at the day of Pen te cost, when his king dom be gan more visi bly to take place, and he was made, or mani fested to be the Lord and Christ; or of his com ing to take ven ge ance on his ene mies, that would not have him to rule over them, and the per se cu tors of his min is ters, at the de struc tion of Je r u sa lem.

We should note that it was J. N. Darby who first gave this verse, and many others, its new meaning, which, ac cord ing to Darby, is to be un der stood of his sec ond com ing in judg ment:

“*Ye shall not have gone over the cit ies of Is rael...*” This tes ti mony of the dis ci ples in Is rael ex tends even to the re turn of the Lord. In ter rupted by the de struc tion of Je ru sa lem, and un fin ished, it was to be ac com plished. Another tes ti mony has been raised up of God in the per son of Paul. (JND CW 24.103.)

“*till the Son of man be come.*” The tes ti mony may be re sumed in Is rael, when ever they are again in their land and the req ui site spir i tual power is sent forth by God. (JND Syn 3.73.)

By plac ing a dis pen sa tion of an un known length of time [the church age, which, ac cord ing to JND, was un known to the OT proph ets] in verses like this, Darby was able to teach many new and for merly un heard of theo ries. This idea, and simi lar ones, was origi nal with JND, and they came to him af ter he fell from a horse and struck his head, 1827.¹ When he started pre sent ing his new theo ries, ri ots broke out in Europe, and the po lice had to be called in. He pleaded for re lig ious lib erty to pres ent his new theo ries, but he was very much against other’s free dom to coun ter him.

He brought ideas such as this to Amer ica in 1863, and the Amer i can Chris tians re jected them at first. Darby did not quit, and over the years, his new theories became accepted.

The Bap tist, es pe cially, stood against him, but Darby won.

1 He com plained of very sever head aches af ter the ac ci dent. *Let ters*, v. 3, p; 297ff.

Appendix B

The Voice of the Fathers

8. Then, in the case of the pub li can, who ex celled the Phari see in prayer, [we find] that it was not be cause he wor shipped an other Fa ther that he re ceived tes ti mony from the Lord that he was justified rather [than the other]; but because with great humility, apart from all boasting and pride, he made con fes sion to the same God. The par able of the two sons also: those who are sent into the vine yard, of whom one in deed op posed his fa ther, but af ter wards re pent ed, when re p en tance prof ited him noth ing; the other, how ever, prom ised to go, at once as sur ing his fa ther, but he did not go (for “every man is a liar;” [Fn. Ps. cxvi. 2.] “to will is pres ent with him, but he finds not means to per form” [Fn. Rom. vii. 18.]), — [this par able, I say], points out one and the same Fa ther. Then, again, this truth was clearly shown forth by the par able of the fig- tree, of which the Lord says, “Be hold, now these three years I come seek ing fruit on this fig- tree, but I find none” (point ing on wards, by the proph ets, to His ad vent, by whom He came from time to time, seek ing the fruit of right eous ness from them, which he did not find), and also by the cir cum stance that, for the reason al ready men tioned, the fig- tree should be hewn down. And, with out us ing a par able, the Lord said to Je ru sa lem, ‘O Je ru sa lem, Je ru sa lem, thou that killest the proph ets, and ston est those that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chick ens trader her wings, and ye would not! Be hold, your house shall be left unto you deso late.” For that which had been said in the par able, “Be hold, for three years I come seek ing fruit,” and in clear terms, again, [where He says], “How often would I have gathered thy children together,” shall be [found] a falsehood, if we do not understand His advent, which is [announced] by the proph ets — if, in fact, He came to them but once, and then for the first time. But since He who chose the pa tri archs and those [who lived un der the first cove nant], is the same Word of God who did both visit them through the pro phetic Spirit, and us also who have been called to gether from all quar ters by His ad vent; in ad di tion to what has been al ready said, He truly de clared, “Many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall re cline with Abra ham, and Isaac, and Ja cob, in the king dom of heaven. But the chil dren of the king dom shall go into outer dark ness; there shall be weep ing and gnashing of teeth.” If, then, those who do believe in Him through the preach ing of His apostles through out the east and west shall re cline with Abra ham, Isaac, and Ja cob, in the king dom of heaven, par tak ing with them of the [heav enly] ban quet, one and the same God is set forth as He who did in deed choose the pa tri archs, vis ited also the peo ple, and called the Gen tiles.¹

1 *Ire naeus Against Heresies, The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V. 1.518. Eerd mans.