

MATTHEW TWENTY-FOUR

AND

THE REVELATION

AN ANALYSIS, LITERAL TRANSLATION AND  
EXPOSITION OF EACH

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## A FOREWORD

This book is divided into two parts. One concerns the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, and the other, the book of the Revelation. Each of these parts is divided into three portions: first, The Analysis; second, the Literal Translation; and third, the Exposition.

The Analyses concern the parts with which they are connected and each has three divisions: The Introduction, The Prophecy and The Conclusion. It will be found helpful in reading the Expositions to keep their connected Analyses well in view.

The Literal Translations of the scriptures concerned are introduced because it is thought that some readers, who are not acquainted with the Greek, will be interested and helped in seeing the form of words which the Divine Spirit chose in writing the portions translated. It is to be understood, however, that this reproduction is not exact but only approximate, for often, especially as related to the placement of the verb, it is not possible to follow the order of words as they stand in the Greek, and, at the same time, produce intelligible English. Nevertheless, the order which is given in the original, as far as possible, has been preserved, even though the English phraseology, in not a few cases, has been strained in order to bring this to pass. The author, in making the translation, has followed the "textus receptus" of Stephens (1550), as tested and corrected by Doctor Eberhard Nestle. In addition, he has made use of such literal and paraphrastic translations as have been at his disposal. The reader may understand that this work of translation has been submitted to the observation of those better instructed in the Greek than himself, for which reason the rendering given may be accepted as fairly representing the meaning of the original. In reading the Translation the following is to be kept in mind: supplied words have been printed in italics; alternate readings have been put in brackets; and the words in the Greek which are not needed in the English have been placed in parentheses.

The Expositions have been arranged in the form of numbered paragraphs in order that reference to them may be the easier. It is to be noted that the order of these paragraphs is not always that of their subject-matter, but of the contents of the chapters. The paragraph-themes, therefore, are not always related in thought. At the same time, since they follow the chronological development of the chapters, they are regularly progressive. It is to be observed that the scriptural quotations in the Exposition of Matthew Twenty-four, are, for the most part, from the Literal Translation, and, in the Exposition of the Revelation, from the Authorized Version. It is almost needless to say it, though it is well to do so, that the thoughts expressed in the Expositions represent the author's prophetic views, and not, in any sense, those of the China Inland Mission with which it is his privilege to serve.

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

# THE ANALYSIS

## THE THREE SECTIONS

### THE FIRST SECTION

I	THE INTRODUCTION . . . . .	[verses] 1-3
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	2. The occasion . . . . .	2
	3. The question . . . . .	3

### THE SECOND SECTION

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		(The dividing verse; 15)
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# THE LITERAL TRANSLATION

## THE FIRST SECTION

### THE INTRODUCTION

24:1-3

*This introduction (1-3) is related to the prophecy which follows it (4-41). As such, it is made up of three parts: the place where the prophecy was spoken (1); the statement which gave occasion to it (2); and the two-fold question of which it is an answer (3).*

And (the) Jesus going out, went away from the temple; and his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. 2 But he answered and said to them: See you not all these *things*? Amen, I say to you, there will in no wise be left here a stone upon a stone which will not assuredly be thrown down.

3 And as he was sitting upon the mountain of the olive trees, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell to us when these *things* will be? and what will be the sign of thy coming and of the consummation of the age?

## THE SECOND SECTION

### THE PROPHECY

24:4-41

### THE FIRST HALF

24:4-14

*The prophecy as a whole (4-41) is related to the reign of the Antichrist and the persons and events which are associated with him (15). It covers, therefore, the space of seven years (Dan. 9:24-27). The whole is divided into two equal parts, the first half representing three and a half years (4-14), and the second, another three and a half years (15-41). The middle verse reveals the self-deification of the Antichrist (15), which event is the dividing point between the "tribulation" (9; see the Translation) and the "great tribulation" (21; see the Translation).*

4 And (the) Jesus answering said to them: Take heed, lest any *one* deceive you. 5 For many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ; and they will deceive many. 6 Moreover you will hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see, be not frightened; for it must needs come to pass; but not yet is the end. 7 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and famines and earthquakes will be in *divers* places. 8 But all these *things* are a beginning of travails. 9 Then they will deliver you up into tribulation, and will kill you; and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name. 10 And then many will be made to fall, and they will deliver up one another, and will hate one another. 11 And

many false prophets will arise, and will deceive many; 12 and because (the) lawlessness will have been multiplied, the love of the many will wax cold. 13 But the *one* holding out to *the* end, the same will be saved. 14 And these (the) good tidings of the kingdom will be heralded in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then will come the end.

## THE SECOND HALF

24:15-41

15 When therefore you see the abomination of the desolation, (the *one which* was spoken of through Daniel the prophet), standing in *the* holy place; the *one* reading let him consider; 16 then the *ones who are* in (the) Judea, let them flee to the mountains; 17 the *one who is* upon the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house; 18 and the *one* in the field, let him not turn back to take his mantle. 19 But woe to the *ones who* are with child and to the *ones who* give suck in those days. 20 And pray you that your flight be not in winter, nor on Sabbath. 21 For then will be great tribulation, such as has not been from *the* beginning of *the* world till (the) now, no, nor in any wise will be. 22 And except those days had been shortened, not any flesh would have been saved; but on account of the elect those days will be shortened. 23 Then if any say to you, Behold, here the Christ, or Here, believe not. 24 For false christs will arise, and false prophets, and will give great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 Behold, I have foretold *it* to you. 26 If therefore they shall say to you, Behold, he is in the wilderness, do not go out; Behold, in the secret chambers, do not believe. 27 For as the lightning comes out from *the* east, and shines as far as *the* west, so also will be the coming of the Son of (the) man. 28 Wherever the carcass may be, there the vultures will be gathered together. 29 But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then will appear the sign of the Son of (the) man in the heaven; and then all the tribes of the earth will lament, and they will see the Son of (the) man coming upon the clouds of the heaven, with power and great glory; 31 and he will send his angels with a voice of a great trumpet; and they will gather together his elect out of the four winds, from *the* ends of *the* heavens to *the* ends of them. 32 But from the fig tree learn the parable; when already its branch is become tender, and it puts forth the leaves, you know that the summer *is* nigh; 33 so also you, when you see all these *things*, know you that he is nigh, at *the* doors: 34 Amen, I say to you, this generation will in no wise pass away till all these *things* be accomplished. 35 The heaven and the earth will pass away; but my words will in no wise pass away.

36 But concerning that day and that hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, neither the Son, but the Father only. 37 For as the days of (the) Noah, so will be also the coming of the Son of (the) man. 38 For as they were in the days, the *ones* before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till the day Noah entered into the ark, 39 and they knew not till the flood came and took away all, so also will be the coming of the Son of (the) man. 40 Then two will be in the field; one is taken away and one is left; 41 two grinding at the mill; one is taken away and one is left.

## THE THIRD SECTION

THE CONCLUSION

24:42-51

*The conclusion (42-51) grows out of the prophecy (4-41). It is made up of three parts: the exhortation to watch for the coming of the Son of man (42-44); the promise of blessing to those who do watch (45-47); and the warning of cursing to those who do not (48-51).*

42 Watch you, therefore, because you know not *on* what day your Lord comes. 43 But this know you, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be dug through. 44 Because of this also be you ready; because in *an* hour you think not, the Son of (the) man comes.

45 Who then is the faithful and discreet bondman, whom his Lord has placed over his household, to give to them the food in season? 46 Blessed that bondman, whom, coming, his Lord will find so doing. 47 Amen, I say to you, that over all his possessions he will place him. 48 But if that worthless bondman shall say in his heart: My Lord delayeth, 49 and shall begin to strike the fellow bondman, *and* shall eat and shall drink with the drunken, 50 the Lord of that bondman will come in a day when he does not expect, and in *an* hour when he does not know; 51 and will cut him in two, and will appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there will be (the) weeping and (the) gnashing of (the) teeth.

# THE EXPOSITION

## 1

The twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew occupies a unique place in the prophetic writings. This is the case for two reasons. In the first place, apart from the Revelation, it is the fullest presentation of the period in view to be found in the Word of God; and in the second, it is evidently the model after which all later prophecies, including the Revelation, are patterned, the mold into which they are run, the key by which they are unlocked. Not to understand the chapter, therefore, is to miss the meaning of the remainder of prophecy. To understand it is to make possible the placing of other prophetic utterances in their rightful position and relationship, and thus to give to them their correct interpretation. The chapter then, has a paramount claim upon all students of prophecy.

## 2

The analysis of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is a natural one and is easily discerned by considering its subject matter. There is at the beginning a section, which is an introduction, wherein the Master makes a certain statement, which leads the disciples to ask a certain question in explanation of it; there is at the end another section, which is a conclusion, wherein the Master makes certain deductions from what He has previously said and then adds to these certain exhortations and warnings; and there lies between this introduction and conclusion another section, which is the Master's prophetic answer to the question asked by the disciples at the beginning. The first of the above sections is from verse one to four, inclusive; the second, from verse four to forty-one, inclusive; and the third, from verse forty-two to fifty-one, inclusive. There is, in addition to these three sections, a sub-division of the second section into two portions. The first portion is from verse four to fourteen, inclusive; and the second, from verse fifteen to forty-one, inclusive; (see the Analysis and Translation).

## 3

The time which Christ has in view throughout the chapter is, as we believe, the future seven-year period in which the Antichrist is to live and reign on the earth. This period had been defined and described in the Old Testament (Dan. 9:25-27; 11:23-45; 12:1-13). But, in spite of the various details which had thus been given, there were many more which had not been revealed. Christ, under these circumstances, readily responded to the question which His disciples asked of Him (3). In doing this, He presented to them a large and vivid portrayal of the events which were to mark the period mentioned. These were supremely important, for they were even then impending (4-8), and, when they should take place, they were to try the faith of man as no other events ever had (21, 22).

## 4

In evidence of the truth that the seven-year period of the Antichrist is in view throughout the chapter, the following facts are to be noted: first, the Scripture at large makes it clear that the space of time during which the Antichrist is to

reign is one of seven years (Dan. 9:25-27; 12:11, 12; Rev. 11:3; 12:6, 14); second, the chapter leads up to and ushers in the appearing of Christ, which event, according to the teaching of Scripture, is at the end of the seven-year reign of the Antichrist (14, 27, 29, 30; 2 Thess. 2:1-8; Rev. 19:11-21); third, the time under review is one of "tribulation" (8, 9; see the Translation), and is that of the "great tribulation" (21, 22; see the Translation); which tribulations are introduced by the Antichrist, and hence, carried on by him and in his time (Rev. 12:13-15; 13:1-7); fourth, the period is the one in which the image is set up in the holy place (15), which event is brought to pass by the false prophet who lives in the days of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:11-15); and lastly, it is definitely stated that the time in view is that spoken of by Daniel the prophet (15), reference to whose writings makes plain the fact that this is the period in which the Antichrist has made his covenant with the Jewish nation for the space of a "week," that is, seven years (Dan. 9:27; 12:11). It is to be observed that this last fact is an important one, for it indicates that the three events spoken of in the three passages--the setting up of the image (15), the breaking of the covenant (Dan. 9:27) and the taking away of the sacrifice (Dan. 12:11)--are synchronous; and hence, as it is plain that Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 are exactly in the middle of the seven years, it becomes clear that Matthew 24:15 is.

## 5

The conclusion that the reign of the Antichrist is one of seven years is reached in the following manner: Daniel in his day prophesied that the time appointed to his people, the Jews, was that of "seventy weeks" (Dan. 9:24). Sixty-nine of these were to be "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince," and to the more exact time when this One should be "cut off, but not for himself," these last words, evidently, referring to the crucifixion (Dan. 9:25, 26). From the fact that a long space of time is expressed by the foregoing words, namely, from the going forth of the commandment to the death of Christ upon the cross, it is clear that the word translated "weeks" is not one of days, but of years; and from the added fact that the word "week," in the original, signifies a period divided into seven parts, it is evident first, that the whole period of "seventy weeks" is to be understood as representing four hundred and ninety years, and second, that the period of "seven weeks and threescore and two weeks," that is, sixty-nine weeks, is to be understood as representing four hundred and eighty-three years. There is much difference of opinion as to when the Scripture indicates that the commandment referred to was put forth. But beginning the reckoning with the year spoken of by Daniel, namely, that in which Christ was crucified (29 A.D.), and reckoning backward for the four hundred and eighty-three years mentioned, it seems quite certain that the time in the mind of the Spirit is that described by Nehemiah (2:1-8), which was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign, that is 454 B.C. Each of the sixty-nine "weeks," therefore, is to be regarded as containing seven years. Thus the remaining, or seventieth "week," is one which is exactly seven years in length (Dan. 9:27). That this "week" is still future is manifest from the fact that the details therein given cannot possibly be fitted into the historic incidents of the past, no prince having confirmed a covenant with Israel for seven years or having broken it after three and a half years by causing a sacrifice and oblation to cease (Dan. 9:27). We conclude, therefore, that the whole of the seven years lies forward in time, and that its events are to be connected with the prince who is to come, who will be a desolator and will himself be desolated (Dan. 9:26, 27), this being none other than the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3-8; Rev. 19:11-20).

Many commentators hold that the episode in verse fifteen--the setting up of the abomination of desolation--and the further episodes of verse sixteen through verse twenty-six--the fleeing into the mountains and the great tribulation which follows--are to be regarded as fulfilled prophecy. There is an aspect of truth in this view of the verses, for certainly the temple was desecrated by the Romans, following the taking of Jerusalem by Titus (A.D. 70), and certainly the early Christians were greatly persecuted and did flee to the mountains of Perea, finding refuge by so doing. But we question whether such experiences exhausted the prophecies here given, or, in the final sense, fulfilled them. It seem to us that this is one of the many cases in the prophetic scriptures where there is a double fulfillment, that is, that after the primary fulfillment, there is a secondary one; after the minor fulfillment, a major one. It is evident that the prophecy in Isaiah (61:1, 2), which Christ quoted in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), is a case in point, there being a first and second fulfillment of the words spoken, the final utterance--"the day of vengeance of our God," (Isa. 61:2)--indicating a still future application. It is evident also that the prophecy in Joel (2:28-32), which Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21), is a case in point, there being a first and second fulfillment of the words spoken, the full prediction of heavenly portents (Joel 2:30, 31) not having taken place at Pentecost, but being reserved to the last days of this present age. Cases of this kind in Scripture could largely be multiplied, a given prophecy having a double fulfilling, the first now being history, the prophecy having been fulfilled, and the second still being prophecy, the full and final content not having been fulfilled. In other words--as has often been noted--many prophecies are like a landscape, the horizon of which is bounded by a range of mountains, but which range being ascended, there is revealed a second range further on. In each case of this kind the first range represents a prophetic fulfillment; but the second range represents *the* prophetic fulfillment. Thus it is, as we believe, with verse fifteen of this chapter. The setting up of the Roman standards in the temple and other like defiling events were a true accomplishment of Daniel's prophecy and Christ's reiteration of it. But the prophecy and reiteration will have still another and future application, the whole being connected with the coming days of the Antichrist's reign (2 Thess. 2:3, 4; Rev. 13:4-15). It is this second, major and future application, which, as we proceed, we shall keep particularly in view.

Such interpreters of Matthew twenty-four as have the backward look, believing its prophecies were fulfilled in apostolic times, not only hold that the abomination of desolation which was to stand in the holy place (15) was the Roman standards with their heathen emblems, but also, that the Antichrist was the Roman army, or, more particularly, the Roman Emperor whom the army represented and served. It must be admitted that there is a measure of truth in this view. The whole Roman government, including its army, was antichristian, and the God-defying and saint-persecuting Roman Emperor was indeed an antichrist. But, once more, the Roman governmental system at the time of the apostles, either at the siege of Jerusalem or during the persecutions which followed, did not exhaust or even completely fulfill the prophecies uttered by the Lord, and later, by His Spirit-inspired followers, concerning the Antichrist. In proof of this statement, let us point out the following: The chapter under review is not to be broken into fragments, but is to be regarded as a whole; and hence, when its events once begin, they are to be understood as going on uninterruptedly and rapidly to their conclusion. This means that there follows the revelation of the abomination in the holy place

(15), the flight into the mountains (16-20); and there follows the flight, the great tribulation (21, 22); and there follow the tribulation, the false prophets and christs (23-26); and there follow the false teachers, the heavenly portents, including the sign of the Son of man (27-30); and there follow the sign, the coming of the Son of man and the sending of the angels for the elect (31). Now this sequence of events may rightfully be applied to the siege of Jerusalem under Titus up to the point of the persecutions and false teachers (16-26). But from thence onward, the application breaks down, there having been at that time no heavenly portents such as the evangelists describe (29; Mark 13:24, 25, 35; Luke 21:25, 26); the sign of the Son of man not having been given (30); the angels not having gathered the elect (31-41; Mark 13:27; Luke 17:34-37); and the Lord not having appeared (30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27). Moreover, the description of the Antichrist given by Paul, indicates a person different from any Roman Emperor, for the apostle declares that he will be sinful beyond what any such person ever was. He calls him the "man of sin," the "son of perdition," the "wicked," and the "lie" (2 Thess. 2:3, 8, 11); he describes him as the arch-blasphemer of God and the arch-assumer of deity (2 Thess. 2:4); and he affirms, because of his wickedness, that he will be consumed by the Lord and with the brightness of His appearing (2 Thess. 2:8). These details look, not backward, but forward; not to a person in the past, but to one in the future. And finally, John wrote (96 A.D.) concerning the Antichrist--using almost the same language to describe him as Paul did--a full generation after Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans, portraying the Man of Sin, not as one who had lived or was then living, but as one who was still to come, and hence, of a different time and character than any who had previously existed (Rev. 13:1-18; 17:7-14). For these reasons, we are of the opinion that we have here another case of double fulfillment, Titus, as the head of the Roman government and army, being *an* antichrist, and thus a first and minor fulfillment of the Matthew prophecy; and the future Man of Sin being *the* Antichrist, and thus the second and major fulfillment of the same.

## 8

We conclude, in view of the foregoing considerations, that the seven-year period of the Antichrist begins at verse four of the chapter and ends at verse forty-one; and hence--the self-deification of the Antichrist being portrayed by verse fifteen (Dan. 11:36-39; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4; Rev. 13:4-15)--that the events which are described by verses four to fourteen occur in the first three and a half years and are in preparation for the Antichrist's self-deification, and those described by verses fifteen to forty-one occur in the second three and a half years and are in consequence of that self-deification. We further conclude, as a result, that the events portrayed in verses four to fourteen do not refer to the long period of time known to us as the Christian era. They do this so far as principle is concerned, this being manifested by the fact that the whole past age has been characterized by false christs, wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes (5-7). But this view of the passage is obtained by a process of secondary application rather than one of primary interpretation, for, as we have seen, an exact placing of verses four to fourteen locates them within the first half of the seven-year period, as a similar exact placing of verses fifteen to forty-one locates them within the last half of the same period.

## 9

A confirmation of the above reasoning is secured by noticing carefully the question which the disciples asked the Lord, and, additionally, the fact that the

Master, all through His discourse, was answering the enquiry which had been made of Him. The question was this: "Tell to us when these *things* will be? and what will be the sign of thy coming and of the consummation of the age?" (3). And the prophetic answer keeps closely and accurately to the details of the enquiry thus expressed. In other words, Christ did not make the disciples' question, as many persons think, the occasion for presenting a general statement concerning prophetic truth. His followers had asked when the temple would be thrown down, and what would be the sign of both His coming and the finishing of the age; and His reply had in view these two enquiries, and nothing besides. We must be careful, therefore, not to read into Christ's discourse, especially from a church-period standpoint, what was not intended to be and is not there.

## 10

It is interesting to note, in addition to the above, that Christ's reply is so framed as to make the first part of it deal with the "When?" and the second part with the "What?" of the disciples' question; "When shall these things be?" and "What will be the sign?" The answer to the "When?" is found in the first portion of the prophetic statement, from verse four to fourteen, inclusive; and the answer to the "What?" is found in the second portion, from verse fifteen to forty-one, inclusive. But an important statement is to be added to this. The whole of the double enquiry was connected with the "end of the world" [or, age]. The answer, therefore, does not pertain to general dispensational periods. It has to do, as has been said, with one period only, namely, the end of the age, which is the seven year reign of the Antichrist. This statement is seen to be true, first, from the question asked, secondly, from the details of the description given; and thirdly and particularly, from the fact that Christ either implies or states, some ten times over, that he is speaking exclusively of end-time conditions (13, 14, 15, 21, 27, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36-41).

## 11

Reference has been made in the preceding paragraphs to the fact that the seven-year end-time was uppermost in the minds both of the disciples and the Lord, and hence, that the events of this period constitute the theme of the chapter's prophecy. This being kept in view, it is important to observe that the Greek words for "end" used by the disciples and Christ are not the same, and that the difference between them is not one of chance but design. When the disciples asked their question in verse three, "What?"--as it is in the Authorized Version--"shall be the end of the world?" [or, age], they used for the word "end" the word *sunteleia*. But when the Master spoke in verses six, thirteen and fourteen, saying, "But the end is not yet," "But he that shall endure unto the end," and "Then shall the end come," He used for the word "end" the word *telos*. Now it is true, that each of the words referred to means end. But the first one (*sunteleia*), signifies a general and approximate end, and the second one (*telos*), a particular and exact one. In other words, *sunteleia* implies a combination of parts which make toward one end, and which implies, therefore, a more or less lengthened period of time in which a number of events may occur; but *telos* signifies an end which has been reached, and which implies, therefore, a moment of time, sharply defined, and marked off, frequently, by a single event. The first of these words presents the idea of a time process which is a consummation (see the Revised Version margin); while the second presents the thought that the process has been brought to a conclusion and the complete end has come.

## 12

It is to be understood from the above that the disciples desired--as evidenced by their question--to be informed concerning the various events of the more or less lengthened *sunteleia* end-time; and it is to be noted that the Lord responded to this desire--as evidenced by His reply--in a large and detailed manner. But it is to be observed, when the Master spoke of the "end" in the three several verses where the word occurs (6, 13, 14), that His thought passed from the general *sunteleia* end to the exact *telos* one, that is, to the full end of the end-time, which would be the conclusion of the age and would be brought to pass by His appearing. As an incidental thought to the foregoing, it is instructive to observe that the Lord used in Matt. 28:20, in the phrase, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" [or, age], not the word *telos* for end but *sunteleia*, thus indicating--as He did also in Matt. 24:14--that the gospel would be preached by the disciples in the end-time period of seven years and that His presence would be their strength and comfort throughout the course of its serious and trying events.

## 13

We may now understand what Christ meant when He said, in verse six, "But not yet is the end." He had been speaking of the things which would occur in the longer period, namely, in the first three and a half years of the *sunteleia* end. But following this, His thought went forward to the *telos* end--for this is the word He used--which end would only be reached when all of the intermediate prophesied events of the *sunteleia* end had been fulfilled, which meant that the *telos* end was somewhat removed from those events. We may now also understand that the Lord said what He did--"But not yet is the end"--in order to correct what He knew would be a false conclusion on the part of his hearers. As it has been pointed out, He had been telling the apostles that the first three and a half years of the Antichrist's reign would bring them into tribulation (9; see the Translation), and He anticipated that the temptation would be upon them to conclude that their sufferings would immediately thereafter be brought to a close. But this was not to be the case. So in loving warning of their being further tested by suffering, He declared, "But not yet is the end" (6), that is, the full end; whereupon He added, by the way of a still further gracious explanation concerning this earlier period, "All these *things are a beginning of travails*" (8).

## 14

It is evident from what has been said that Christ intended to imply in verses six and eight that a second period of another three and a half years lay before the disciples; that this would bring a greater tribulation (21, 22); and that it would only be at the end of these later years--when the gospel had been preached to all of the nations, when the sign of the Son of man had been seen, when the Son of man Himself had appeared, and when the full end had thus been reached--that they would be delivered from persecution and suffering (14, 22, 29, 30). And this throws light upon the Lord's remark in verse thirteen, "But the one holding out to *the end*" (*telos*), that is, through the seven years to their full conclusion, "the same will be saved" [or, delivered], a statement which indicates that such a one would not only be preserved spiritually, but also would be delivered physically, that is, from the persecution of the Antichrist, this to be brought to pass by the

appearing and power of Christ, the destroyer's Destroyer (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 2:7, 8; Rev. 19:11-20). In connection with this last remark we would call attention to the fact that the thought of overcoming as a result of endurance, and the deliverance to which this leads, is one which runs, in the Revelation, throughout the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). This indicates that Matthew twenty-four and the letters to the seven churches are not only intimately connected, but also are identical, both as to the time and experience which are therein described.

## 15

Matthew twenty-four is to be considered in connection with Mark thirteen, Luke seventeen and Luke twenty-one, and it seems quite certain that the four scriptures, from a general standpoint, are concurrent with one another. But certain distinctions between the four passages are to be observed. It appears that the addresses of Matthew twenty-four, Mark thirteen and Luke seventeen are mostly the same, the only difference being in the fact that the record of Matthew is full and complete, and the records of Mark and Luke are abridged, and, in this sense, incomplete. It appears also that the addresses in Luke seventeen and twenty-one, while the same in substance as the others, differ from them in several particulars, namely, in time, place and manner, and, partly in audience. A careful reading of the passages indicates that the Lord's addresses reported by Luke were given first in time, in the temple court, openly, and to a general company; the address of the seventeenth chapter to the Pharisees (Luke 17:20); and that of the twenty-first to the apostles and disciples (Luke 21:1-7, 37); but that the address reported by Matthew and Mark was given later, on the Mount of Olives, privately and to a select number of apostles (Matt. 24:1-3; Mark 13:1-4). In other words, what Christ had first taught to the Pharisees, apostles and disciples in general terms, He afterwards repeated to a smaller company--it may be only Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mark 13:3)--in more specific and detailed terms. The natural occasion of these events seems to have been this. Christ, at this time of His earthly ministry, spent His days in Jerusalem and chiefly in the temple court. He spent His evenings and nights on the Mount of Olives. What, therefore, the apostles heard Him say in the busy day and did not understand, they asked Him about in the quiet of the evening, as they sat together under the shadow and protection of the great trees on Mount Olivet. At such times, Christ both repeated and expounded His day-time discourses.

## 16

The above explains what not a few students have noticed, that the prophetic reach of the Matthew and Mark passages appears to be greater than that of the twenty-first of Luke passage, the latter seeming to find its objective in the first destruction of Jerusalem, and the former finding their objective in the second advent. Nevertheless, careful observation discloses the fact that this distinction is more apparent than real, for all of the passages cover the days of the Antichrist and each one ends at the coming of the Son of man (Matt. 24:15, 30; Mark 13:14, 26; Luke 21:25-27). At the same time, it is a fact that the view of the whole period as presented by Matthew and Mark is more clearly and distinctly given than it is as presented by Luke. We thus conclude that there is here brought before us one of the many cases in Scripture where we are shown that God reveals His most intimate truths--the larger view being granted only to the disciples on the Mount--to those who are most intimately connected with Him (Dan. 12:4, 9, 10; Matt. 17:1, 2; Rev. 1:3, 11).

## 17

One of the facts which arises out of the above scriptural presentation is this, that the description of the destruction of Jerusalem given in Luke (21:20-24) has both a nearer and farther aspect. The shorter view which is found there shows us Jerusalem surrounded by the armies of the Roman nation under Titus (in A.D. 70) and finally overthrown by them. But the longer one shows us Jerusalem rebuilt--which rebuilding is now going on--surrounded by the armies of all the nations and again overthrown, this second time in the last days, whenever these will be (Zech. 14:1-3). Thus it appears that the first destruction was meant to be a prefigurement of the second--this being another case of double fulfillment--so that the Lord in the temple discourse, as recorded by Luke in chapter twenty-one, was prophesying concerning both the one destruction and the other. It is to be kept in mind then, that the first application of the prophecy does not displace the second.

## 18

It is here that the Olivet discourse, as recorded by Matthew and Mark, explains the temple discourse, as recorded by Luke in chapter twenty-one; for what is near at hand in the latter account becomes farther away in the former one. We come to see thus that Jerusalem's history is not only in the past but also in the future, and that her cup of woe must again be filled and drunk to the dregs. To confirm this thought, it is only necessary to point out the fact that the passage in Luke concerning Jerusalem gives many of the same details as are given in Matthew and Mark, which places finally, all of the prophecies in the days of the Antichrist (Matt. 24:15-30; Mark 13:14-26; Luke 21:20-27).

## 19

There is a striking statement in Luke 21:24 which throws a bright and even glaring light on Jerusalem's future. It reads as follows: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Here is a revelation which no man, either Jew or Gentile, either peasant or prince, may bring to naught, and which fixes Jerusalem's present and future political state as one of humiliation, till the end of the age. The world war has done much for the Holy City; and Zionism will accomplish much more. But the present British mandate over Palestine, kindly as it is, implies that the land is still under Gentile rule; and Zionism, in spite of all its longings and strivings, will never be able to break this or a similar Gentile yoke. Moreover, the last great ruler of this age of Israel, Antichrist, will--as may be proved--be a Gentile, so that Gentile dominion will continue until the end of the present dispensation. It is to be observed then, that Israel's national hope, however little she realizes it, is bound up, not in any Gentile, but in a Jew, even in Jesus Christ; for He alone can and will bring the Gentile domination over Jerusalem to an end. This He will do by His coming in power and great glory (Zech. 14:1-9).

## 20

The foregoing makes it clear that there is a national aspect about the twenty-

fourth chapter of Matthew--the same is found also in Mark thirteen, Luke seventeen and Luke twenty-one--its whole movement being toward the coming of Israel's King and the establishment of the Jewish kingdom. That this is so becomes doubly clear as one reads on in Matthew, into and through the twenty-fifth chapter, for there the King is seen seated upon His throne (25:3, 34), which is Jewish (Luke 1:31-33), and there He brings the Jewish question into final and decisive review, the King's "brethren" in the passage being Christian Jews (25:34-45). It is at this time that Christ judges the Gentile nations according to their treatment of and relationship with the Jews (25:34-46), and He then, as a result of judgment, sets up a Jewish kingdom, of which Solomon's with all its extent and glory, was but a faint prototype (Ps. 2:1-12; 46:1-11; 67:1-7; 72:1-19; Isa. 12:1-6; 32:1, 2, 15-20; 35:1-10; Dan. 2:31-35, 44, 45; Rev. 20:1-6). Until these events take place, Jerusalem, as Christ said, must lie under Gentile dominion, and whatever her prosperity, must remain a vassal state.

## 21

In considering the subject matter of the prophetic portion of the chapter (4-41), the most impressive thing to note is that Christ gives a large place in His discourse to the apostasy which was then and is still to come. He refers to this both in the earlier and later part of His prophecy, in that portion which is related to the first three and a half years (4, 5, 11, 12) and also in that which is related to the second (23-26). Indeed, He began His address with the thought of an approaching spiritual declension, putting thus the emphasis of precedence upon it (4, 5). Christ evidently meant by this to teach that the main characteristic of the days of the Antichrist, and hence, the main temptations and dangers of the time to the disciples were to be, not of a physical nature, but of a spiritual. And when it is remembered how fearful the physical part is to be (9, 15-22) one may the more readily understand the terribleness of the spiritual.

## 22

In addition to this, the prophecy shows that the peril of false teaching was steadily to increase to the end of the age, as also, a yieldingness to it (10, 11, 23, 24). In the first three and a half years, evidently, there is a general letting down of the standard of truth and the result is that many saints are thus deceived (4, 5, 11). But in the second three and a half years, the Antichrist substitutes himself for the Christ, his emissaries go abroad demanding by great signs and wonders that men shall worship him, and even the very elect are nigh unto giving up their faith in Christ (15, 23, 24; Rev. 13:11-15). There is thus produced the great apostasy, which has already begun and is going on apace, but which will find its climax in the seven years, and particularly, in the last three and a half years, that is, at the full end of the age (2 Thess. 2:1-11; 2 Tim. 3:1-7, 13; 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

## 23

Christ laid His second emphasis, judging from the space given to the subject in His prophetic discourse, upon the physical trial which was and is to come. Here again He referred to the matter both in the first and second portions of His prophecy, that is, as related to the first three and a half years (9) and also to the second (16-24). But here again, there is a difference between the first

experience described and the second. In the earlier, the persecution and suffering come as an indirect result of the general conditions prevailing, it being a time of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and social and family upheaval (7-10); while in the later, these follow as a direct consequence of Antichrist's self-deification and his hatred of God and of all who name themselves by the name of Christ (15-22). It follows that here also there is a steady increase from the earlier time to the later, since, in the experience of peril, the venom of Satan, through his willing tool the Antichrist, is more and more intensified and felt the nearer men come to the end of the age (Rev. 12:9-12; 13:4-7). It thus becomes evident that this later time is to produce persecution and suffering such as the world has never yet known; not during the ten great persecutions of the apostolic and post-apostolic times; nor during the Reformation sufferings; nor during the Spanish inquisitions; nor during the various Armenian massacres; for Christ's prophecy distinctly says, "For then will be great tribulation, such as has not been from *the beginning of the world till now, no nor in any wise will be*" (21); and it adds, "And except those days had been shortened, not any flesh would have been saved: but on account of the elect those days will be shortened" (22).

## 24

It is to be observed that the whole of the seven years of the Antichrist is a period of tribulation, for the same Greek word (*thlipsis*) is used to describe both the first and second half of that time (9, 21; see the Translation). But it is to be further observed that the Lord puts before this word as it is used in the second half period, the adjective "great" (*megale*), which indicates that it is only at the end of the second three and a half years that the climax of persecution is reached and the sufferings of the saints are terminated. As before remarked, deliverance from persecution is brought to pass by the personal appearing of Christ, who destroys the Antichrist and thus rescues those who are being afflicted by him (24-27; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2:3-10; Rev. 19:11-21).

## 25

The fourteenth verse stands in the midst of the prophecyings of our Lord as a bright light in a deep darkness. All about this verse, according to the Lord's discourse, there is the gloom of falsehood (4, 5), hatred (10), apostasy (11, 12), persecution (19, 21), fear (15-20; Luke 21:25, 26) and sudden and terrible death (9, 21, 22). But Christ declared, in spite of all these things, that the saints would endure and overcome, proclaiming the good tidings of the kingdom throughout the inhabited earth, for a testimony to all the nations (14). Persecuted and scattered abroad they would be, as afterwards took place (Acts 8:1) and will yet again take place (Rev. 12:13, 14; 13:5-7). But as it was in the past so it will be in the future, "Those that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). This last, world-wide, quick and intensive proclamation of the gospel during the seven years, is undoubtedly, that to which Christ referred in a primary sense when He gave the great commission, as recorded in Matt. 28:19, 20 and Mark 16:15-18. For, while it is true that this commission is applicable in principle to the saints of all time, the promise of Matt. 28:20, be it remembered, is consummated in the *sunteleia* end, that is, in the seven-year period of the Antichrist's reign, so that the commandment is likewise a prophecy, and as such, it looks in the direction of the lat days to the consummation of the present age.

The foregoing being the case, we may state that the promises concerning the signs which are mentioned in Mark's version of the commission (Mark 16:17, 18) have to do not so much with present time and experience as with future, and that they are then for the particular purpose--as took place in Moses' days (Exod. 7:10-12, 19-22; 2 Tim. 3:8)--of matching and overmatching the great signs and wonders of the false prophets of the Antichrist (24; 2 Thess. 2:8-13; Rev. 11:3-6; 13:10-15). This is touchingly suggestive of the fact that God's grace abounds to the very end of the age and in its most apostate state, His proclamation of mercy, attested by manifestation of divine power, being made to men as long as there is hope of there being open minds and hearts to receive it (Rev. 3:20; 14:6, 7). Growing out of these truths there is presented to us the blessed fact that there will be even in these trying times those who, like Paul, will not be moved, neither will count their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24; Rev. 14:1-5). This indeed is a very bright light in the midst of a great and rapidly deepening darkness.

It is often said that the gospel referred to in verse fourteen, being the "gospel of the kingdom," is not the gospel of the grace of God. But are there many gospels? or is there more even than one gospel? Paul said not, and he breathed an anathema upon any person who should preach any other than the one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Indeed, in the nature of the case there can be but one gospel, for the gospel is good tidings, and such can only come from a proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Whether then it is in the Old Testament or New, in the Gospels or Epistles, salvation is of grace and the gospel which proclaims this salvation is the gospel of grace. This one gospel, however, is called in Scripture by different names, according to the times in which it is preached, the particular objective which is set before it and the special emphasis which circumstance lays upon it. Thus we have the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23), the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:4), the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24), the gospel of God (Rom. 15:16), the glorious gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11), the gospel of His Son (Rom. 1:9), the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15:19), the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1), the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:8), the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15), the gospel of the circumcision and uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7), and the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6). And thus also, in confirmation of the fact that the gospel of the kingdom is also the gospel of grace, we have the example of Paul who preached the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24) and also preached the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 20:25; 28:23, 30, 31). It is clear then that these persons--as recorded in verse fourteen--who preach the "gospel of the kingdom" are also preaching the gospel of the grace of God, this and nothing besides. The reason why this gospel of grace is here called the gospel of the kingdom is this: it is, as it was when Christ first came, because it will be necessary in the last days to put a kingdom emphasis upon the gospel, in order that men may be prepared to meet the coming King and so be made spiritually ready to enter the coming kingdom.

Nothing is clearer in the prophetic discourse of the Lord than the fact that He

took it for granted, throughout, that the apostles and disciples whom He addressed would be in the midst of, and thus see and experience all of the things which He was foretelling. But in spite of clearness, this fact is not generally realized or accepted as truth. On the contrary, the opinion is held that all who had then named the name of Christ would have no part in the untoward events of the time of the Antichrist if these had then occurred, but would have been lifted up and out of tribulation-evil before such might have come. It seems necessary, therefore, to review the statements of the Lord as given in the chapter and thus draw attention to the actual words which He used. In doing this, in order to make the matter the more emphatic, we print the personal pronouns and certain other words in italics: "And Jesus answering said to them: Take heed, lest any one deceive *you*" (4); "Moreover *you* will hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see, be not frightened; for it must needs come to pass" (6); "Then they will deliver *you* up into tribulation, and will kill *you*; and *you* will be hated by all the nations on account of my name" (9); "When therefore *you* see the abomination of the desolation, (the one which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet), standing in the holy place; the *one reading* let *him* consider" (15); "And pray *you* that your flight be not in winter, nor on Sabbath" (20); "Then if any say to *you*: Behold, here the Christ, or, Here, believe not" (23); "Behold, I have foretold it to *you*" (25); "If therefore they shall say to *you*: Behold, he is in the wilderness, do not go out; Behold, in the secret chambers, do not believe" (26); "So also *you*, when *you* see all these things, know *you* that he is nigh, at the doors" (33); "Amen, I say to *you*, this generation will in no wise pass away till all these things be accomplished" (34). Here, by reason of the language used, we must conclude that Christ sought plainly to set forth the solemn truth that the apostles and early disciples were to live in the seven years of the Antichrist (34); that they were to see the abomination of desolation which was to be set up by the false prophet (2 Thess. 3:3, 4; Rev. 13:11-15) standing in the holy place (15); that they were to be subject to the spiritual and physical temptations of those times (4, 5, 11, 12, 23-25); that they were to be hated and persecuted, being brought into tribulation (9, 10, 16-22); that many of them would suffer martyrdom for the name's sake (9, 22); that they were called upon, in spite of all suffering, to endure to the full end, with the promise, if they did so, of being delivered (13); that they were to watch the signs and know by these when the Son of man would be near at hand (33; Luke 21:27-31); and finally, that their hope would be, in the midst of their many and great distresses, that Christ would personally, suddenly and gloriously return to and for them (26, 27, 29, 30-41; Luke 21:25-28).

## 29

It is to be observed now that Christ never withdrew the above forewarning words, either before or after Pentecost. We must conclude, therefore, that the early disciples must have expected and looked for the times and conditions of which He had spoken. And there is no reason to suppose that they were in the least surprised when persecution began and many of their number were called upon to attest their love for Christ by their devotion in suffering and death. Indeed, as we learn from the patristic writings, the disciples were so prepared for this order of things by the Lord's prophecy that many of them were led to the conclusion that the Roman Emperor was the Antichrist, that his persecution was the great tribulation, and, therefore, that the Lord would speedily appear. In other words, there is every reason to believe that the apostles and early disciples had fully understood, when Christ had spoken concerning the last evil days, that He had definitely intended to convey to them the thought that the things which He had foretold would come in their time and that they themselves would be involved in the terribleness of their destroying power (Acts 4:23-30; 5:22-33, 41; 14:22; 20:24; 21:13). This conclusion explains, as none other does, the attitude of the

apostles concerning suffering. They reckoned it an honor to be counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name (Acts 5:41); Peter exhorted the disciples to rejoice when they were made partakers of Christ's sufferings (1 Pet. 4:12, 13); and Paul made it distinctly plain that all who would live godly should suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12), and also, that it was through much tribulation that the saints would enter the kingdom (Acts 14:22). The order of events in their minds was, first, the suffering, and then the kingdom. And for the kingdom's sake they willingly endured the suffering.

## 30

There is a verse in Luke's Gospel which seems to contradict all that has been said above, to which, in consequence, we must give our special attention. And in order that its words may be freshly before us, we shall quote it in full. As we do this, we give to it its literal translation: "Watch [or, keep awake] you therefore in every season, praying that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these *things* being about to come to pass, and to stand in presence of the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). Here the Lord appears to indicate that watchfulness and prayer would bring to pass a complete deliverance from the days of the Antichrist and thus from his persecutions, with the presumption--as many teach--that this would be accomplished, before the days of tribulation should come, by Christ's returning and bringing His saints to Himself. But does the verse mean this? We do not think that it does for the following reasons: First, the verses immediately preceding positively declare that the persons whom He was addressing would live in the time of the Antichrist and would feel the effect of his persecuting hatred (Luke 21:12-35). Second, the verse does not tell the apostles and disciples to watch and pray that they may escape *away from* the things which were to come to pass, but rather *out of* them, for the verb is not *apopheugo*, to escape away-from, but *ek-pheugo*, to escape out-of-the-midst-of, the preposition *ek* of the verb implying that the disciples would be living in the times of the evils in mind and that the evils themselves would be round about and pressing upon them (Luke 21:36; Greek). Third, the possible escaping of the disciples referred to cannot mean a physical one, for the preceding verses distinctly affirm, in spite of watching and praying, that many saints would be both afflicted and killed (Luke 21:12, 16, 17, 23, 24); and hence, they must mean a spiritual one, such as would, in the midst of persecution and sufferings, keep their faith firm and their testimony true (Matt. 24:13; Mark 13:11-13; Luke 21:13-19). And finally, the word "stand" (*histemi*), as interpreted by its use in Scripture, generally represents not a physical attitude but a spiritual one, the many times it is used in the Epistles conveying the thought of spiritual overcoming and victory (Rom. 14:4; 1 Cor. 7:37; 2 Cor. 1:24; Eph. 6:11, 13, 14; Col. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:12; Jude 24). Instead, therefore, of the verse contradicting the previous teaching, it strongly confirms it, for it sets forth the fact that the apostles and first disciples were to live face to face with the Antichrist; that they were to be in the midst of his persecutions; that they were to be sorely tried and almost overwhelmed by his evil devices; that there would be constant need of their watching and praying if spiritual deliverance was to be obtained; and finally, that such deliverances would be given, and thus, that they would be counted worthy to stand blameless in the holy presence of the Son of man, both in life and at His coming.

## 31

In addition to the truth that Christ taught that the apostles and early disciples would live in the days of the Antichrist and be in the midst of his persecutions,

it is clear that He set forth the fact that these days and experiences were then impending. We judge thus for the following reasons: Christ declared, in the first place, that though heaven and earth would pass away, His words would not pass away (35). He declared, in the second place, that that generation would not pass till all the things which He had foretold had been accomplished (34). He declared, in the third place, that those whom He was addressing would see the Antichrist and hence, would be living within the seven years of his reign (15). He declared, in the fourth place, that they would be brought into "tribulation" (9; see the Translation), and also, into "the great tribulation" (15-22; see the Translation), this implying that they were to live both in the first three and a half years and in the second. He declared, in the fifth place, that they would see both the sign of the Son of man and the Son of man Himself (26-30). And lastly, He commanded them to watch for His return as for an event which would take place in their time, and both speedily and unexpectedly (42-44). All this indicates that the various episodes which Christ had described, these being within the lifetime of His hearers, were regarded as at hand and impending.

## 32

This nearness of last events had been the message of John the Baptist when he began his ministry (Matt. 3:1, 2). It had been that of Christ as He commenced His teachings in Galilee (Mark 1:14, 15). It had been that of the apostles as they went forth into their service of preaching and healing (Matt. 10:5-7). And now, evidently, it was the teaching of the Lord as He foretold the things which were to come to pass. In the view of Christ then, the dark clouds of the rule of the Antichrist were already spreading over the sky, and the storm of his God-defying and saint-persecuting wickedness was about to break upon the earth. This, therefore, was the reason why the Lord sought to prepare His devoted followers for the holocaust of evil which was to be. It was the love that loved His own unto the end which prompted what otherwise would almost seem like too great frankness. For Christ plainly foresaw the false christs and the Antichrist, the disciples' suffering and despair, and also the strong temptation which would be upon them to conclude, in the midst of persecutions, that their absent Lord had forgotten, that He did not care and that there was little use in following Him if they were to be left alone and unprotected in such fire and flood as this; and so, not in too great frankness but in infinite tenderness, He lifted the veil before advancing time and event and bade His followers to behold, to beware and to endure unto the end (6-13). This explains how it was, a little later, that these same apostles and disciples faced prisons, stonings, stocks, crosses and headsmen's blocks and axes with faith in God in their hearts and praise to Him upon their lips (Acts 5:41; 7:54-60; 20:23-24; 21:13). They remembered that the time of suffering had been foretold. Thus, being forewarned, they found themselves forearmed.

## 33

It is important in considering the prophetic portion of Matthew twenty-four, to endeavor to ascertain what its teaching is concerning the time of Christ's return. And in doing this we need to guard against a common and serious error, namely, the conviction that because we cannot know *everything* about the time, it follows that we cannot know *anything* about it. It is indeed true that no man may know the "day and hour," the Father not having revealed this to the angels, nor even to the Son (36; Mark 13:32). But it is not true that the saints may not know the age, for it is the present one (Gal. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:1-8; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 20:1-6); nor the part of the age, for it is the last portion of it (Matt. 13:39, 40, 49, Greek;

28:20, Greek; 2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 18); nor possibly, at last, the year, for there seems reason to believe that the coming will be in or immediately after the seventh year of the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:1-20). The saints then, will see the signs, perceive their import and come to understand their meaning, both in respect to the general time of Christ's advent and the redemption of the elect which it will bring to pass (15, 23-33; Mark 13:14, 21-30; Luke 21:25-32). Daniel, speaking of this end-time period had said, that the wise should understand (Dan. 12:9, 10); and the Lord, both in His address in the temple court (Luke 21:28-31) and here on Olivet's brow (32, 33; Mark 13:28, 29), makes it plain, using both statement and parable to this end, that His followers would recognize the period when He should be nigh, even at the doors (33). In other words, we may conclude that the experience of the later saints as related to the second advent will be similar to that of the earlier ones as related to the first, namely, that while they may not be permitted to know the time of the coming exactly, they may come to know it approximately. And Christ's prophetic address in this chapter leads a long way to this approximation. For certain facts in His discourse, in this respect, stand forth with great clearness and these are a sure guide to us in our seeking to understand somewhat about the time.

## 34

Before, however, we consider the facts just referred to, let us look at the Lord's words in reference to approximate knowledge as given in Luke's Gospel, so that we may have the warrant of these before us. We give them in their literal form: "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity, roaring of *the* sea and rolling waves, men fainting from fear and expectation of that which is coming on the habitable earth; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken; and then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these *things* are beginning to occur, raise yourselves and lift your heads, because your deliverance draws near. And he spoke a parable to them; Behold the fig tree and all the trees; when they sprout already, looking of yourselves, you know that already the summer is near. So also you, when you see these *things* coming to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:25-31). And let us look at similar words given in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel: "But from the fig tree learn the parable; when already its branch is become tender, and it puts forth the leaves, you know that the summer *is* nigh; so also you, when you see all these *things* know you that he is nigh, at *the* doors" (32, 33). Manifestly then, as Daniel said, the wise will understand. By the signs described, which were ultimately to be realized, the Lord taught that the saints were to have the privilege of knowing, increasingly and more and more exactly, when their redemption was drawing nigh and Christ was about to appear.

## 35

Examining now that part of Christ's prophetic address which refers to the time of the advent, the following truths seem to be made clear: First, there is no intimation in it that there was to be an advent and consequent translation and resurrection previous to the seven years of the Antichrist, which silence of statement is presumptive evidence of the fact that the Lord intended that the apostles and disciples should understand that His coming would occur either within or after the seven-year period and that these events of translation and resurrection would then take place. Second, Christ plainly taught his hearers that they were to see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place

(15), which event occurs, as we have seen, in the middle of the prophetic "week" (Dan. 9:27), that is, at the end of the first three and a half years of the Antichrist's reign; which makes it clear that the disciples were to continue on earth through those years, and hence, that Christ would not come until after that time had run out its course. Third, the Lord declared that the great tribulation would follow the self-deification of the Antichrist (15) and would continue through the second three and a half years of his reign (16-22), and also, that it would be "immediately after the tribulation of those days" that the disciples would see the sign of the Son of man (29, 30); all of which makes it plain--the sign preceding the coming--that the advent was not to take place until the tribulation had been brought to a conclusion, that is, till the end of the second three and a half years and thus at the end of the seven years. And lastly, Christ unmistakably taught that it was at this time, namely, after the time of the sign of His advent, that He would send forth His angels to gather His elect to Himself, the coming for and with His saints not being greatly separated in time but being almost synchronous, the one event taking place and then immediately afterwards the other (31, 36-41; Mark 13:24-30; Luke 21:25-28); which once more reveals the fact that the coming and the accompanying resurrection and translation would not occur until the end of the seven-year period.

## 36

This much then the apostles and disciples might perceive. Nevertheless, it remained true that they could not know the day or hour of Christ's return (36, 44). For while they could understand that the coming would take place at the end of the tribulation and after the sign of the Son of man, they could not know accurately when the seven years would begin, or hence, how short or long after its events the time of the advent would be, since God had not revealed this. It is interesting to note in this connection that the measurement of time, which Daniel gives, of the second portion of the seven years indicates that Christ may not come at the exact close of these years, the prophet mentioning not the usual "thousand two hundred and threescore days"--three and a half years (Rev. 11:23; 12:6, 14; 13:5)--but in one place a "thousand two hundred and ninety days"--three and a half years and thirty days (Dan. 12:11)--and in another, a "thousand three hundred and five and thirty days"--three and a half years and seventy-five days (Dan. 12:12). This then is additional evidence of the fact, while the apostles and early disciples could know the time of the coming approximately, that they could not know it exactly. This reasoning explains--and, apparently it is the only one which does--the seeming inconsistency between Christ's two statements; "So also you, when you see all these *things*, know you that he is nigh, at the doors" (33); and "You know not on what day your Lord comes" (42). As a matter of fact, there is no inconsistency between the two statements, each being reconcilably and consistently true.

## 37

We have said that the apostles and disciples were told to watch not only for Christ, but also for certain signs which were to precede His coming and which were thus to be the assurance both of its fact and also of its nearing approach. In connection with this statement it is to be noted that it is often declared by prophetic students, that it would be mentally and spiritually impossible for one to watch for the Lord if one should also be obliged to look for signs, looking for the signs, as they say, making it impossible to watch for the person. This is true so far as watching for a momentarily expected event is concerned. But it is

not true otherwise, for in such a case one would watch for the person through the signs, as often takes place in human affairs. This is the kind of watching which Paul did in his time, for he wrote, "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 3:13), where the apostle looked for the appearing through the coming. And this is the kind of watching which Peter did in his time, for he wrote, "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:12, 13), where the apostle looked from a long time before the millennium for things which were not to come to pass until after that period of time. And this now is the kind of looking which the Lord enjoined upon His apostles and disciples, for He spoke of signs occurring both on earth (15) and in the heavens (29), and He specially named one of the last as "the sign of the Son of man" (30), all of which separately the apostles and disciples were to see before they should look upon the returning Christ (30), and all of which conjointly were to be the evidence and promise of His nearing advent (29, 30; Mark 13:24-26; Luke 21:25-32). Watching, therefore, according to the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, was not to be a looking for a momentarily expected advent--except after all of the signs had been fulfilled--but one wherein the eyes of faith should look forward to the advent through such events as Christ had said would precede it.

## 38

There is a certain clearly expressed truth in the New Testament which confirms the above statements and which needs special emphasizing, both because it is important and because it is usually set aside, or, at least, passed by. We refer to that one which signifies that it was wholly impossible in the apostolic days for believers to watch momentarily for the coming of Christ, in spite of the fact that the scriptures in Matt. 24:42-44; Mark 13:32-37 and Luke 21:24-26 undoubtedly enjoin such watching. The reason of this is, that certain divinely predicted events had to be fulfilled before the momentary watching therein commanded could take place, and some of these were not fulfilled until the close of the apostolic period, while others were not fulfilled then, and indeed, have not been fulfilled since. This means that Christ's injunction to watch, as recorded in the passages quoted, did not have application in a momentary sense during the apostolic period, the predictions of intermediate events hindering the development of those conditions which made this kind of watching possible. If there were need, we could give a long list of minor and major prophecies recorded in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles which required fulfillment before the time of Christ's return; but we shall content ourselves with mentioning only three of these, each one of a major kind.

First, Christ told Peter, when he was in middle life, that he should die and that this event should take place when he was an old man (John 21:18), which meant that the apostle should live, as it turned out, about thirty-five years longer, and hence implied that he could not hope to see Christ's coming and could not watch momentarily for His return (2 Pet. 1:13-15). And be it noted that what was true of Peter was true of all the apostles and disciples who lived in Peter's time, for none of these could watch momentarily until Christ's prediction concerning the apostle had been fulfilled, that is, until he had become an old man and had died. Second, Christ spoke to Paul and said "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21), which word was heard by the apostle soon after his conversion at about 35 A.D., and which prediction lengthened out his life until, as we now know, he reached Rome at about 65 A.D. during which period of thirty

years Paul could not have watched momentarily for Christ's return, the commandment of going "far hence" not being put into effect until the close of his life, when even then he, like Peter, was told that he must die (2 Tim. 4:6-8). And be it noted that what was true of Paul was true of all believers who lived in Paul's time, for none of these could watch momentarily until the apostle had proceeded not only to the Gentiles but also "far hence" to these, and at last had died. And finally, Christ spoke to the apostles, at the time of His last interview with them, not only commanding them to go to all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20), but also distinctly prophesying that they would do this, inasmuch as He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), which last undoubtedly meant, in its first intent, westward as far as Spain and eastward as far as India--the then known world--and which has come to mean in its larger and more modern application far more than these extremes, westward, eastward, northward and southward. And be it noted that the apostles and disciples could not look momentarily for the return of Christ until this command and prophecy had been brought to pass and the church had moved forward even unto "the uttermost part of the earth." These are unimpeachable facts; and they bring us back to the statements made in the foregoing paragraph to the effect that watching, in the apostolic days, was looking for a more or less distant event through predicted intermediate events. It follows, therefore, that momentary watching is for a special and yet future class of believers, namely for those who will see all remaining intermediate prophecies fulfilled, including witnessing to the ends of the earth, and also the manifestation of the various signs spoken of by Christ as recorded in Matthew twenty-four and in similar passages of Scripture. In other words, when the church has witnessed to all the nations (14), when the Antichrist has run his course (15, 27) and when the sign of the Son of man has appeared (29, 30), then and then only may the followers of Christ watch momentarily for His return. All scriptural injunctions to "watch," "look," and "wait," therefore, are to be read in the light of these facts and to be interpreted in harmony with them.

## 39

The above mentioned truths are made more clear and certain when we keep in mind the meaning of the word "watch," as it fell from the Lord's lips. The word used is the Greek *gregoreuo*, which means literally, to keep awake. Now it is evident that the word in this connection cannot mean a physical keeping awake. It must, therefore, refer to a spiritual condition and attitude. It indicates, in other words, such a spiritual state as would keep those who were watching constantly vigilant as to the events, each and all, which had been prophesied, and thus, in the present connection, ever prepared for and dedicated to the things which would make for the coming of the King and His kingdom.

## 40

In saying this last, it appears that one is not apart from the mind of Christ, for the final words of His discourse point directly and emphatically in the direction of the thought expressed. The words referred to come in the closing section of the chapter--what we have called, in the Analysis, the Conclusion--and are as follows: "Watch you, therefore, because you know not *on* what day your Lord comes. But this know you, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be dug through. Because of this also be you ready; because in *an* hour you think not, the Son of man comes. Who then is the faithful and discreet bondman, whom His Lord

has placed over his household, to give to them the food in season? Blessed that bondman, whom, coming, his Lord will find so doing. Amen, I say to you, that over all his possessions he will place him. But if that worthless bondman shall say in his heart: My Lord delayeth, and shall begin to strike the fellow bondman, *and* shall eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that bondman will come in a day when he does not expect, and in *an* hour when he does not know; and will cut him in two, and will appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (42-51).

## 41

It will be seen from the foregoing words that there are two figures of speech contained in them, each of which is based upon a similar set of circumstances, but each of which has a different lesson-objective. The first is the picture of a householder who possesses certain property and who finds it to his personal interest to preserve it intact from the danger of robbers. The second is a picture of a bondman who has been raised--like Joseph of old (Gen. 39:1-6)--from his position of slavery into that of stewardship, and hence who, while still a bondman, is responsible for his master's interests in the house and field. Behind both of these pictures lies the certainty of an anticipated but finally a sudden coming; in the first place of a thief, who digs through the wall of the house in order to steal, and in the second of the master who appears in order to discover whether his bondman-steward has been faithful or unfaithful, and to judge him accordingly. The background of each parable, therefore, is certainty as to visitation but uncertainty as to the time and manner of the event. The foreground of each is, in the one case, preparedness in view of personal interests, and in the other of faithfulness in view of another's interests, that is, the master's. But the essential thing to notice in both parables is this, that the application is spiritual; that the duty of each individual is to keep vigilant in the fulfillment of his trust; and that keeping vigilant is being ready for the one who is to come and being found prepared for all that the coming may mean. In other words--to apply now the Lord's teaching to prophecy--the final test of watching for Christ's coming is not holding certain views as to the time and process of the coming, however valuable all prophetic knowledge is, but rather that of a life attachment and devotion to the Lord, by reason of which the individual concerned will be kept spiritually alert and faithful, and thus ever prepared for the return whenever and however it may take place.

## 42

It seems certain that the above is the impression which Christ sought to produce upon the minds of His apostles and disciples. He taught them that He would return; He told them that His return would occur after certain events; and He declared that the exact day and hour could not be known; He exhorted them, therefore, for their own sakes and for His sake, to live in view of His advent and so be ready and prepared whenever it might take place; and finally, He declared that the one who so watched would be blessed and the one who did not so watch would be cursed. Let us repeat it then; watching is keeping wide awake spiritually, and being faithful continually to all the obligations which the coming One has imposed upon us. In other words, it is, as the Master said, occupying till He shall come (Luke 19:13). And this includes being vigilant as to the meaning and value of each prophetic event, whether it be nearer or farther away.

## 43

Christ, in pointing out to His apostles and disciples the need of watchfulness, gave a simple and at the same time a sure test by which they were to be safeguarded from Antichrist's deceits and thus be made ready for His return. And here too, in order that His words may be freshly before us, we shall quote them in full: "Then if any say to you: Behold, here the Christ, or, Here, believe not. For false christs will arise, and false prophets, and will give great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have foretold *it* to you. If therefore they will say to you: Behold, he is in the wilderness, do not go out; Behold, in the secret chamber, do not believe. For as the lightning comes out from *the* east, and shines as far as *the* west, so also will be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the carcass may be, there the vultures will be gathered together" (23-28). Here then is the frank statement that Antichrist's temptations would be so subtle and persuasive that the disciples, as they should see the multiplied signs and wonders of the false prophets, would almost be misled, wondering if Christ might not be where they said, in the wilderness--outside of Jerusalem--or in the secret chambers--within Jerusalem and in its temple. How then in such evil and perplexing days would they know how and where to look for their returning Lord? And how would they be able to recognize the self-deified Antichrist and his followers? To distinguish truth from error is not easy at any time, and how much more difficult it would be in these peculiar days when truth would seem altogether like error and error altogether like truth.

## 44

It was this condition of things which the Lord foresaw and from the danger of which He desired to deliver His followers. So He said, in effect: "Be not deceived! By this token you may recognize Me and My appearing. I am not from beneath but from above, and I and My manifestation will be like a lightning flash from heaven--sudden, bright and illuminating. And also, by this token you may recognize the Antichrist and his appearing. He is not from above but from beneath, and he and his appearing will be like a beast's carcass lying on some field of earth, around which the foul birds of prey will gather and upon which they will feed. And hence, in watching for me, look not below but above, look not around on earth but steadfastly toward heaven. Thus and thus only will you be able to distinguish the true from the false, the heavenly from the earthly, Myself from the Antichrist and his followers. But doing this, you will be saved." Such was a touch-stone of discernment and deliverance which Christ put into the hands of His apostles and disciples. And a little later, in the midst of terrible sufferings and temptations, the spiritual principle involved in this test proved adequate to their need. And what it was in the past in principle, it will be in the future both in principle and fact, in the midst of the greater trials which are to be.

## 45

We have, at last, come to a question which we have been gradually approaching and which we are forced now to face, it being one of vital interest and importance. The question arises from two or three facts which have either been commented upon or must presently be observed. Let us then state these facts as follows: first, we have said that Christ told His apostles and disciples that their generation

would not pass until what He had prophesied should be fulfilled; second, that the time referred to would be that of the Antichrist, and that it would produce the days of the "tribulation" and "great tribulation"; third, that Christ declared that His hearers would see the Antichrist and be in the midst of his persecutions; and lastly, that the Master prophesied that those who heard His words would see the sign of the Son of man, and, thereafter, His appearing. And now, we are obliged to admit in view of common historical evidence that that generation did pass; that the apostles and early disciples, whatever they saw and suffered, did not see the Antichrist nor pass through the time of the tribulation and great tribulation; and that not one of those who heard the prophecy beheld the sign of the Son of man or the great event which was to follow, namely, the advent of the Lord. Here, indeed, is a difficulty, one which is so great that it has led some persons to scoff at prophetic truth; has led others to deny both the intelligence and veracity of Christ; has led numerous saints to be greatly perplexed over seeming contradictions between prophecy and fact; and finally, as we believe, has led not a few students of the Word to make statements which, though designed to explain existing difficulties, have produced misunderstanding and actually led to increased confusion.

## 46

Referring to these last individuals, we may mention the fact, by way of illustration, that various teachers have affirmed that the word "generation" as used in verse twenty-four was not meant to signify the generation in which the apostles and first disciples lived, but rather the genus or race of the Jews. They have thus sought to accommodate the meaning of the word to the historic fact that the apostolic generation did pass away without the Lord's returning. But in doing this they have set aside, as it seems to us, the natural, etymological and scriptural meaning of the word and the only one which the context of the chapter will possibly allow (33, 34; Mark 13:29, 30; Luke 21:31, 32). We may also mention the fact, by way of further illustration, that some teachers have made the assertion that Christ never taught that the apostles and early disciples would live in the days of the Antichrist, be involved in the tribulation and continue on earth long enough to see the sign of the Son of man, but, on the contrary, that He instructed them that He would return before the seven-year period of the Antichrist had begun and would deliver them from all that its days would bring, and hence, that they would be in heaven and not on earth when the sign of the Son of man should appear. But in making these statements they have quite passed over such a word as this: "When therefore you see the abomination of the desolation, (the *one which* was spoken of through Daniel the prophet), standing in *the* holy place; the *one* reading let him consider" (15); and this, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28); and this, "So also you, when you see all these *things*, know you that he is nigh, at *the* doors" (33). In short, with the above passages before us, we cannot but fear that there has not always been a frank facing of Scripture truth; and we cannot but wonder if it has not sometimes occurred here, as in other relationships of life, that the wish has been the father to the thought, resulting in such a disposition as has unconsciously led to the devising of a prophetic plan with its deliverance from persecution and suffering, which is pleasing to the natural man, but is not in accordance with the Word of God. Of these matters we are not the judge and we cannot express a positive opinion. Nevertheless, we are constrained to say that it is our conviction that the commonly held prophetic outline needs reconsideration and recasting, and that the one which Christ Himself gave in Matthew twenty-four and elsewhere must be accepted and adhered to, whatever the issue may mean to us and others.

And now, it is to this point and place of frank consideration that our studies have brought us. But, first of all, let us see, while preserving all of the scriptural and historical facts of which we have spoken and which have the appearance of being wholly contradictory to one another, if there is not a natural and rightful harmonization of these.

## 47

One of the most plain and impressive truths of the Gospels is, that Christ, when He was on earth, was making a *bona fide* offer of Himself and His kingdom to national Israel. Such a kingdom offer had been the promise held out to the Jews in the Old Testament (Ps. 72:1-19; Isa. 32:1-20; 35:1-10); and Christ came in order to be, in His person and preaching, the fulfiller of these old-time prophecies (Luke 1:26-33; 67-79). In utterance and by many signs, therefore, He sought to prove that He was the promised Messiah and that He stood ready to establish the messianic kingdom (Matt. 10:1-7). Another most plain and impressive truth in the Gospels is, that Christ never offered Himself and His kingdom to the Jews except on the basis of the fulfillment by them of certain conditions. One of these conditions was that they should repent of their sins, of which John's baptism was the outward sign (Matt. 3:1-6; 4:17; Mark 1:14, 15); and another was that they should receive Him as their King, the One who had been sent from God to lead them into His promised kingdom (Matt. 4:17, 23; 10:1-7; Luke 10:1-9). Now, Christ all through His ministry foreknew that He would ultimately be rejected by Israel, and He gradually foretold this through a series of national parables (Matt. 21:28-32; 21:33-45; 22:2-14; 25:14-30; Luke 13:6-9; 14:16-24; 19:11-27). At the same time, He never took advantage of this foreknowledge in His dealings with the Jews, whether He was addressing apostles, disciples or unbelievers. From first to last, He always and without reservation offered Himself and His kingdom to Israel. If there was to be failure of any kind, it would not be on His part, but on that of those who heard His message but would not accept it. His prophetic utterances, therefore, were given from the standpoint of His full intention, after His death and resurrection, to reveal Himself as King and set up His kingdom. This, of course, implied--even as He said (34)--that these events would occur in that generation.

## 48

These statements explain that mysterious assertion in reference to John the Baptist, which Christ made in the early part of His ministry, "This is Elias which was for to come" (Matt. 11:14). Now it is undeniable that Christ knew that John the Baptist was not Elias. Nevertheless, He said that he was. And the reason why He so spoke was that John the Baptist would have been Elias if Israel had accepted Him, and he was not the prophet only because the nation was about to reject Him. In other words, if Christ had foreseen that the Jews would receive Him and His kingdom, He would have sent as His forerunner Elias in person, instead of the Baptist; but foreknowing that they would reject Him and His kingdom, He sent John as the representative of Elias and in his spirit. When Christ comes again, since He will then know that Israel will receive Him and His kingdom (Zech. 12:9-14; 13:1-9), He will send as His forerunner, according to God's promise, none other than Elias himself (Mal. 3:1; 4:5, 6; Matt. 17:1-3; Rev. 11:3-6). This then was Christ's constant attitude toward the Jews. In effect He was always speaking thus: "I am the Messiah, your King. Here and now I offer to you and am prepared to give you the messianic kingdom. It is yours, provided you will accept it." Hence it was that He said--quoting now His full sentence--"If ye will receive it,

this is Elias which was for to come" (Matt. 11:14).

## 49

In addition to the above, the following important truth is to be recognized. A careful reading of the Gospel prophecies will reveal the fact that Christ never assumed the attitude of taking it for granted that the Jews would refuse to accept Him and His kingdom. This, no doubt, is one reason, during His earthly sojourn, why He did not talk about the revelation and establishment of His church which was finally to be produced, His purpose in this respect--the King and kingdom offer to Israel then holding good--being kept in the background. And it was thus, to the last of His life on earth, yea, even after Pentecost, that He held open His offer to the Jewish nation, pleading in person, and later, through Peter, Stephen and Paul, for its acceptance (Acts 2:14-39; 3:12-26; 13:44-47). There were times, with His apostles, when He was more intimately frank, when, teaching directly by statement or indirectly by parable, He portrayed an untoward and sorrowful ending in respect to Himself and the kingdom. But in general, even with His apostles, this was not the case. In short, Christ fulfilled every condition necessary to make good the Father's promises to Israel; and hence He went about, as it were, with the kingdom in His hand and with His hand outstretched and wide open. His utterances, therefore, were in harmony with and expressive of this attitude. As He would say nothing, so He would do nothing which would hinder the accepting of the offer that He was making; and also, as He would say everything, so He would do everything which would lead to the acceptance of this offer.

## 50

We are now able to observe that the course which Christ thus took is the explanation of the nature and trend of His prophetic statements, including those in Matthew twenty-four, Mark thirteen, Luke seventeen and Luke twenty-one. If the Jewish nation, officially and generally, had accepted Him, we are safe in saying that He would have died on the cross; would have risen from the dead; would have ascended into heaven; would have poured out His spirit upon His disciples; would have suffered the Antichrist to rise and carry on his persecutions; and then, sometime in that generation, would have returned to His disciples and nation and set up the kingdom which, according to the promise, will never be destroyed (Dan. 2:45). This was His program, so far as His offer is concerned. Hence, in our prophetic passage Christ said, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars" (6); "When therefore you see the abomination of the desolation (the *one which* was spoken of through Daniel the prophet), standing in *the* holy place" (15); "And pray you that your flight be not in winter, nor on Sabbath" (20); "If therefore they shall say to you: Behold, he is in the wilderness, do not go out; Behold, in the secret chambers, do not believe" (26); "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:31); "So also you, when you see all these *things*, know you that he is nigh, at *the* doors" (33); "Amen, I say to you, this generation will in no wise pass away till all these *things* be accomplished" (34). In other words, Christ, making an offer of the kingdom without deceit or reservation, spoke as if the Jewish nation would accept it, and hence, that the apostles would live to see it and all the events which would precede it.

## 51

Passing on into the further issue of things, we would remind our readers that it is a well-known, as it is an infinitely sad fact, that the Jews rejected their King, and with Him, His kingdom (Luke 19:11-27). They crucified the One who had over His head the title: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37); and in effect they thus cried, according to Christ's prophetic word, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14, 27; John 19:14, 15). Moreover, they deliberately and officially rejected those whom Christ subsequently sent to plead His cause, such as Peter (Acts 4:1, 2, 21; 5:27, 28, 33), and Stephen (Acts 7:54-60) and, at a later time, Paul (Acts 25:1-3; 28:17-29). And this action on their part, sealed for that time their national doom. From henceforth, for many long and weary years--as we now well know--they were to be a nation "scattered and peeled" (Isa. 18:2), exiled from their city and land (Isa. 1:1-9), and reviled and persecuted in every nation where they might seek refuge (Jer. 8:1-22). Not that God would ever forget the promises made unto the fathers (Jer. 3:12-18), for all that He declared to them must be fulfilled (Isa. 11:1-16; 12:1-6; 14:1-3). Nevertheless, He rejected Israel and turned from the old order to a new. This turning, however, was not accomplished at once. There was first a transition period, which is represented by the book of the Acts, wherein God still brooded over Israel. But finally the break came, and then God turned from Israel to the Gentiles.

## 52

It was in this way that God came forth with a plan which had been prepared from all eternity, but which was only now openly revealed, namely, the forming out of the Jews and Gentiles a new body which should be His church (Acts 15:13-17; Eph. 3:1-6) and which should be world-wide, both in its derivation and relationship (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Acts 13:2-4; Rom. 1:14-16). And thus He began to speak, particularly through His revelations to Paul, of this great conception of His, it being the most high, holy and far-reaching of any which He had so far made known to men (Eph. 1:1-14; 2:1-10; 3:1-11). And so necessarily, as He assumed this altered attitude, with this new objective and project before Him, the Jewish kingdom affairs, while not given up, were put in abeyance. Thus it came to pass that the prophecies of Matthew twenty-four, Mark thirteen, Luke seventeen and Luke twenty-one became, for the time being, inapplicable and inoperative, the fulfillment of these being postponed until all that God purposed to do in the new order of things should be brought to pass; and hence, suddenly, the present tenses of these prophetic chapters became future ones. This then is where the prophecies of the four passages now are. They remain the unbreakable word of Christ (35). At the same time, the bringing to pass of their predictions is deferred until some unknown future time. But at that time, as Christ taught, there will be a last period of seven years, when once more God's providential movements will be directed toward Palestine and Israel; the rise, reign and self-deification of the Antichrist and the consequent persecution of the saints and the destruction of many of them will occur; the sign and portents promised will be given; the sending forth of the angels for the elect will take place; and, at last, immediately after the sign of the Son of man, the Lord will appear, will destroy the Antichrist and his followers and will set up the kingdom of which there shall be no end (Dan. 2:44).

## 53

By referring, in a previous paragraph, to the fact that the apostles and disciples

whom Christ addressed were, after Pentecost, to be Christians, and to the added fact that they represented others who in the last days were likewise to be Christians, we touched upon, so far as the church is concerned, the most important part of our subject; for it is plain that the scriptural answer to the question thus raised vitally affects the earthly destiny of many believers, and possibly ourselves. If, for instance, Christ declared that the apostles and early disciples would go into the days of the Antichrist and suffer his persecutions, but did not mean to infer that they would be members of the body of Christ or that they represented others who would be such, then from a personal and practical standpoint the prophecies of the four chapters have little relationship to us. But, on the other hand, if He intended to teach that these apostles and disciples were themselves to be Christians, and thus that they fitly and fully represented other Christians of a later day, then the prophecies relate themselves to us and demand our closest consideration. For in this latter case and from a present-day standpoint, it becomes evident that tempting and dark days lie before the church, and that these may be nearer to us than we think. There is need, therefore, that the saints should both study and preach prophecy, that days of trial may not take them unawares.

## 54

Before we discuss this part of our subject, there is an incidental question which needs our attention. This is as to whether God loves His saints too well, as is often said, to allow them to suffer seriously, as, for instance, to live face to face with the Antichrist and endure his persecutions. Our answer to this question must be found from the Scripture, and also from historical experience. Keeping both of these in view, may we ask, Did God love His only begotten Son so well that He spared Him from serious physical suffering? And again, Did He love the apostles and early disciples so well as to spare them? And again, Did He love the Christians of the Reformation period so well as to spare them? And again, Did He love those who have more recently passed through the persecutions of Madagascar, China and Armenia so well as to spare them? To ask these questions is to answer them. Indeed, it may be said, in spite of the uniqueness of the life of Jesus, that what was true of Him so far as physical suffering is concerned must necessarily be true of His followers, for as is the Head so are the members, and also Christ Himself declared that "The servant is not greater than his lord" (Matt. 10:24, 25; John 15:20). Paul, in his time, spoke of suffering in this wise--reading the words literally--"To you it was granted" (as a privilege) "concerning Christ, not only to believe on him, but also concerning him to suffer" (Phil. 1:29). In fact, in God's economy and for this present time suffering is to be regarded, not as an unnatural experience, but instead, as a most natural one (Rom. 8:35, 36). Our surprise, therefore, may well be not when we suffer but rather when we do not. There is a saying which fell from the lips of the apostle Paul which, in these easy and comfortable days, has to most of us only a reminiscent sound: "We must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Well will it be for us, whatever the true interpretation of prophecy is, if we shall make sure to fortify our spirits by keeping the fact well in mind that this saying, with others like it, is still enshrined in Holy Writ.

## 55

In addition to the above, we are to remember that the principle of Christians facing the Antichrist and enduring his persecutions is written large in the Scriptures, for it is made very clear therein that the church has ever stood

before and in opposition to antichrists (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3, 7), and has ever suffered persecution from systems ruled by such (Matt. 2:16-18; 5:11, 44; 23:34; John 15:20; 19:13-18; Acts 8:1; 11:19; 13:50; 2 Tim. 3:12). For the church, therefore, to go into the days of the Antichrist and to be called upon to endure his hatred and harassments is but for her to pass from one phase of an experience into another, the difference being not in kind but in degree. Moreover, the fact that Christians have faced past antichrists and suffered because of them presents strong presumptive evidence that they will face the future Antichrist and suffer because of him. Whatever may be true in regard to this last, it is unmistakably plain that suffering on the part of the church because of antichrists is not inconsistent, but rather, wholly harmonious with the thought and fact of God's most tender love. The question of divine love permitting such suffering, therefore, is not one which needs to be considered. The only question which we are called upon to decide is this--whether or not the saints going through the tribulation is a divine revelation.

## 56

We come now to the question, Whom did the apostles and disciples, who heard the prophetic utterance of our Lord in Matthew twenty-four and concerning whom He spoke therein, represent? In seeking to answer this, let us put our reply in a series of statements: First, the apostles and disciples must have represented--since an antitype is always like its type--a class of persons who would be exactly like themselves, namely, those who would be both Jews and disciples. This thought is confirmed by the fact, first, that the prophecy is Jewish and Palestinian in its setting (2, 15-17, 20), and second, that it portrays full discipleship inasmuch as it sets forth a great devotion on the part of the disciples to Christ's person (9, 14). Second, the apostles and disciples must have represented not simply Jewish discipleship, but as well Christian discipleship, since the apostles were potentially Christians, and, only a little later, were actually such; and also, since to deny this fact would lead one into an impossible scriptural position; for to say that they did not represent Christians as well as Jews in the prophecies under consideration would be to affirm likewise that they did not represent them in other prophetic passages. In this case, for instance, this would be true of the fourteenth of John, where we have the words, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3), which words are such applicable and comforting ones to Christians as to make it impossible to conceive that they were not meant for them. Third, the apostles and disciples must have represented Christians because, as a result of unanswerable logic and thus by common consent, they did so in other and equally vital matters. For instance, the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:13-18; John 20:21) was given to the apostles and to them alone, it never having been repeated in later times; yet Christians at large, including Paul, accepted its mandate as applicable to themselves through the full course of their lives, as has also been true of a host of Spirit-taught disciples who have lived and served through later times. Fourth, the apostles and disciples must have represented Christians as well as Jews in view of the fact that they were not to participate in the events prophesied until after Pentecost had come, that is, not until they themselves had become Christians by being baptized by the one Spirit into the one body of Christ (Zech. 12:9, 10; Luke 24:49; 1 Cor. 12:13). It is to be remembered, if the Jews had accepted Jesus as their King, that the order of events as set forth by Matthew twenty-four and cognate passages would have been this: the crucifixion; the resurrection; the ascension; the outpouring of the Spirit (Pentecost); the revelation and reign of the Antichrist; the tribulation; the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom in the midst of persecutions; the sign of

the Son of man; the sending forth of the angels to gather the elect; the appearing of the Son of man; and finally, the establishment of the kingdom. But it will be seen from this outline that the experience of the seven-year period would have been subsequent to Pentecost, which means that the apostles and early disciples, if they had been actually called upon to fulfill the incidents of the prophecies, would have been at the time of the fulfillment not only Jewish disciples, but also Christian disciples. Lastly, the apostles and early disciples must have represented Christians because the phraseology of Matthew twenty-four and its allied passages is distinctly Christian in character. According to the prophecy, those who fulfill its events are described as follows: they are hated on account of Christ's name (9); they, through enduring to the full end, are delivered (13); they go forth to all the nations preaching the good tidings (14); they have the wisdom of the Holy Spirit so that they are able to understand Daniel's writings (15; Dan. 12:10); they have so much of the fulness of the Holy Spirit that they are directly and specially taught by Him in time of peril (Mark 13:11; Luke 21:14, 15); they suffer, because of their devotion to Christ, persecution and even martyrdom (16-22; Mark 13:11-20; Luke 21:16, 17); they are numbered among the elect of God (24); they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (30); they are gathered as the elect from the four winds of heaven, from one end of heaven to the other (31; Luke 17:34-36); they have part in the first resurrection and translation, that one which is before the millennium and from which all others than Christians are excluded (40, 41; Luke 21:18; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:1-6); and finally, they are commanded to watch and wait for Christ's appearing as only true Christians are called upon and are able to do this (33, 42; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:28, 31, 36).

## 57

The above reasoning seems to be confirmed by considering the possible alternatives to our conclusion, and by a process of elimination concerning them. Let us present these as follows: First, Christ did not teach that the apostles and early disciples would go into the days of the Antichrist because He did not say what He meant and did not mean what He said; which statement, considering our Lord's personality and character, must be at once rejected since it is nigh to blasphemy. Second, Christ said what He meant and meant what He said, but, when He declared that the apostles and early disciples would see the Antichrist and suffer his persecution, He intended to convey the thought that they would pass through these experiences as Jews and not as Christians; which statement cannot be held in view of the fact that He told these same apostles and early disciples that they were to be baptized by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18; 15:26; 16:7-11; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8), this signifying that they were to be baptized into the body of Christ and hence, were to be Christians (Acts 21:4, 5; 2:1-4, 14-18, 38, 39; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13). Third, Christ, while assuming in His discourse (since He was then offering the kingdom to the Jews) that the apostles and early disciples would suffer in the tribulation of the Antichrist, was speaking to them representatively, that is, as standing for a class of persons like themselves who would live, not in that generation but in a later one; but in doing this He did not mean to imply that these last named persons would be wholly like the apostles and early disciples, but only partly so, that is, would be Jews and not Christians; which statement is unwarrantable since it is manifestly contrary to the law of scriptural interpretation as related to types and antitypes, the first invariably and completely represent the last, as far as a type may represent an antitype. Fourth, Christ taught that the saints, dead and living, would be caught up to meet Him in the air at His coming; that this coming would occur before the seven-year rule of the Antichrist; that during the tribulation of the following seven years many persecuted ones would be converted; that these would form a last band of

Christians, and then, that these too, dead and living, would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air as He descends to the earth with those saints who were previously resurrected and translated; which statement might be held as truth if there were any scripture to confirm it, but which may not be so held in view of the fact that no scripture even suggests such a process of events and many scriptures positively contradict it. Fifth, Christ supplemented the teaching which He gave in the Gospels by revelations which He made in the Epistles, and, in doing this, He superseded and contradicted the teaching formerly given by stating that His coming, with the gathering of the saints to Himself, was to take place previous to the revelation of the Antichrist, thus making it impossible for the saints to pass through the tribulation; which statement is to be dismissed as unscriptural, for nowhere do the Epistles state that the coming will take place before the tribulation, most passages being silent as to the time (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28) and some passages strongly teaching a post-tribulation advent (1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7; 20:4). These suppositions, so far as we see, are the only ones which may be considered as alternatives to the conclusion which we have reached, namely, that living Christians will go into and through the tribulation. If, then, all of these alternatives are to be rejected, we must conclude that the teaching of Matthew twenty-four is to stand. We thus judge that the advent of Christ and the gathering of the elect to Him occur after the sign of the Son of man is seen (30), and hence, is at the close of or after the great tribulation (29-41).

## 58

For the above reasons, we cannot hold, as some do, that the apostles and disciples whom Christ addressed represent, from a present-day standpoint, a post-advent class of persons who are converted into a lower order of Jewish saints by the coming of Christ and the consequent resurrection and translation of the church, and who, therefore, are not members of the body of Christ. By every token of true interpretation, so far as we can judge, they stand for all Christians, but particularly for those who, being Jewish, are assembled in Palestine during the seven years of the life and activity of the Antichrist; who have the privilege of witnessing for Christ in the midst of a cataclysm of evil; and who have the high honor of testifying before and against this superlative monster of wickedness, the Man of Sin (2 Thess. 2:3-13; Rev. 11:1-12). At that time, we believe, all that Christ said in Matthew twenty-four to and of his hearers--which He then offered to bring to pass but which later He indefinitely postponed--will be fully accomplished. Then His saying, namely, that that generation will not pass until all the things prophesied have been fulfilled, will become fully and literally true. For in that generation the Antichrist will appear, his persecutions will take place, the sign of the Son of man will be seen, the angels will gather the elect, and, finally, the Son of man will come. Also, in that generation the admonition to watch will be given full effect, not as now as for an event delayed by divine predictions, but as one which is, at last, unhindered and is to be looked for expectantly and momentarily.

## 59

It is clear in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit that God is undertaking a great work, which He began at Pentecost and will finish at the consummation of the age (Matt. 28:20, Greek), this being the gathering out of His elect body from both Jewish and Gentile communities the world over (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:5-11; 13:46; 15:13, 14; Rom. 1:16; Rev. 5:8-10; 15:1-4); and, additionally, the preparing, in

spite of long-suffering grace, the ungodly peoples of the earth for inevitable and destroying judgment (Joel 3:9-17; Zech. 14:1-3; Acts 2:32-35; Rev. 11:15-18; 19:11-21). That God has taken long for the accomplishment of His designs is not surprising, for He has not been willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). How much longer He may take in the further expression of His grace is known only to the Father (38; Acts 1:7). But this is certain: the two prophetic lines of salvation and judgment are gradually converging and one day will surely meet. And this too seems to be certain, that this meeting will be a climax of events; of godly life and faithful testimony on the part of believers (14); of God-defying anarchy and blasphemy on the part of the Antichrist and his followers (15; 2 Thess. 2:7-12); of rescue and glorification of persecuted saints on the part of Christ (23-27; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; Rev. 11:1-9); and of destruction and punishment of the wicked on the part of God (37-39; Jude 14, 15; Rev. 19:11-21). And this also appears to be certain: that the culmination of the above events will take place at the close of the present age, somewhere within or beyond the last days of the seven-year period of the reign of the Antichrist, and in connection with and as a result of the coming and appearing of Him who is both Son of man and Son of God.

## 60

How far the evil activities of the Antichrist will extend beyond Palestine, the Scripture does not make altogether plain. The prophetic chapters which we have been considering are wholly silent upon the subject, for the manifest reason that Christ was speaking in these passages in a pre-pentecostal time and to and about Jewish believers. But there are hints in certain parallel passages of the Revelation, written after it had been made clear by Paul that the church was to contain Gentiles as well as Jews (Eph. 3:1-8), which point to a world-wide and therefore church-wide persecution and suffering. These hints are as follows: In the first place, Antichrist is undoubtedly a Grecian, and, as such, rules at first as king of Greece over an extensive European and Syrian territory, like Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 11:21-45; 12:1-4). In the second place, Antichrist, toward the middle of his career, is made the Emperor of a tenfold kingdom-confederacy, which probably will be a revived and enlarged Roman Empire (Dan. 2:40-45; Rev. 17:7-13). In the third place, Antichrist, as a European Emperor, comes to have power over the earth at large (Rev. 13:7-8). In the fourth place, the harlot, which is an apostate church and which acts in conjunction with the beast, that is, the Antichrist, corrupts the whole earth with her sorceries (Rev. 17:1, 2, 15). In the fifth place, the tribulation involves not only Palestine but also the whole world (Rev. 3:10; 13:6, 7). And in the last place, God's judgments, as expressed through His two witnesses, are co-extensive with world-ungodliness, and they fall, therefore, upon the earth at large (Rev. 11:3-6). Judging from these various scriptures, it is probably true that the prophetic utterances of the Lord, as recorded in the four passages which have been before us, are to be regarded as having a more ample and far-reaching meaning than their form of words suggests. In their first application, they look toward the apostolic age, Jewish Christians and the land of Palestine; but in their second, they have in view the future end of the age, both Jewish and Gentile Christians and all of the countries of the world. We judge, therefore, that the Antichrist, being an earth ruler, will persecute the godly, whoever they may be and wherever they may be found.

## 61

We would conclude by saying that the prophetic truth in Matthew twenty-four and elsewhere which Christ committed to His disciples was not intended to make and did

not make them spiritual pacifists. It did make them idealists, giving them standards and aspirations of a heavenly sort (1 Thess. 1:4-10), and causing their thought and love to be concentrated upon the person of their risen, ascended and coming Lord (Phil. 3:20,21; Heb. 9:28). But aside from these results--which proved refining, elevating and energizing--the apostles and disciples who heard Christ speak of the things which were to come remained and more and more became intensely and immensely energetic in life and work. After the death of Christ, they sought and obtained the filling of the Holy Spirit; and subsequently, they gave themselves to holy living and devoted serving. Manifestly, therefore, the blessed hope, in the case of the apostles and disciples, did not cut a single filament of the nerve of missions, not to speak of severing that nerve. Indeed the hope had just the opposite effect upon them, for under its influence they gave themselves to a wide-spread preaching of the gospel (Acts 8:4; 13:4) and to a prolonged and methodical effort to build up the church of Christ wherever it had been established (Acts 20:28-32). The prophetic teaching which they had received disabused their minds of many conceptions which had been naturally but falsely theirs, putting God's program of events into their thoughts and in place of their own (Acts 1:6-8; 15:13-17). They went forth, therefore, highly sober, steadfast and potent persons, preaching the Word with signs following (Mark 16:19, 20); and presently, thus equipped, they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:5, 6). In addition, these apostles and disciples who looked for Christ's return had large conceptions of God's compassions and purposes, for they both attempted and expected great things in the way of soul-saving, believing that the gospel was the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) and that the Lord was not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). And lastly, those who had been thus encouraged by the hope of the advent to begin the evangelization of the world, found that hope, even through obstacles, tribulations and sufferings, to be their inspiration even to the end of their earthly service. It was thus that they were saved from the fatal mistake of changing their aspirations from the eternal to the temporal, from heaven to earth, and from the Lord to the church, and were enabled to keep their minds and hearts fixed upon the object which had been set before them, namely, the return from heaven of the Son of man and the consequent setting up of the kingdom of which He was to be the exalted and universal King. It came to pass in this wise that Peter, the flaming evangelist, wrote as an old man and just before his death concerning Christ's return, saying, "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13); and also that John, the tranquil builder up of the church, cried out in almost the last days of his greatly prolonged life, saying, "Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7). And all this, without doubt, was the result which Christ anticipated when He gave His followers His prophetic revelation, for it is to be noted that He declared that it would be none other than advent watchers, thus prophetically instructed, who, in the last days, would preach the gospel in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and who, finally, would complete the work of world-wide evangelization and bring to pass the return of the Son of man and the end of the age (14). Christ's utterances in Matthew twenty-four--and the same is true of all the prophetic scriptures--have it, therefore, as their objective to produce spiritually wholesome and balanced Christians, who, being enheartened and energized by the blessed hope, will watch as they work and work as they watch. We may say then, that prophecy holds at the heart of it two transcendently important messages, which the church is ever obligated reverently to hold and sacredly to obey. The first is, "Behold, I come!" And the second is, "Occupy, till I come!"