Daniel - Commentaries by Walter Thomas Prideaux Wolston

Behold the Bridegroom, Great Tribulation, The

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Matthew 24:1-44; Daniel 9:24-27

The subject before us this evening is the Jew in relation to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The question is often raised, Has God cast off His ancient people? The Apostle Paul answers most distinctly in the 11th of Romans, No, He has not, but they have come under His lash. They have come under His judgment for their guilt, and so will Christendom likewise come under the governmental judgment of God, in a day very near at hand, because of their sin. But the Jew is not “cast off” in the sense in which Scripture uses the word — as final rejection — because there is the most abundant testimony that the day is coming, when the Lord will regather His ancient people — the house of Israel and the house of Judah — and He will plant them in the land which He gave to them, and their fathers, for God has plainly said, “One king shall be king to them all,” and “David my servant shall be king over them” (Ezek. 37:22,24), a beautiful allusion to Christ!

Tonight, therefore, it will be my business to show you, if I can, from the Word of God, that this will really take place, as well as to point out the relation which this, at present, despised, and apparently castoff people, has to the Lord Jesus, in the day of His reappearing. I have read these closing verses of Daniel 9 for this reason, that they give us clearly, a bird’s-eye view of the situation. I may say also, very simply, to any person in this audience, that if you and I do not understand the end of the 9th chapter of Daniel, we shall never understand the prophetic Scriptures. I have not got the key that unlocks to me the Old Testament prophetic scriptures, just as in the New Testament, if I do not comprehend the definite import of the parables of Matthew 13, I shall fail to understand the Scriptures that relate to the kingdom of heaven, and the Church. Matthew 13 is dispensationally speaking, the key to the New Testament, and the end of Daniel 9 is the key that unlocks the storehouse of Old Testament prophecy with relation to the Jews. Therefore, I dwell just a moment on it, because it is impossible to get on, unless we have correct thoughts of what God is going to do. If we conclude, as many do, that God has cast off the Jew forever, and that we — Christians — are only going to be blessed, we are running full in the face of, and practically counter to, the testimony of Old Testament scripture.

What has led us into error is this, that we have been reading Old Testament scriptures with New Testament spectacles on, and when we found something about the blessing and enlargement of Israel, we began to apply it to ourselves, instead of really seeing of whom God was writing. We do not need to poach upon Old Testament Scriptures for what our souls need. God has blessed us wonderfully — not the Gentiles generally, but the believers in Christ. You see the character of our blessing is most wonderful, because God brings us to heaven in Christ. The Jew will get blessing by-and-by, but what does he get? He gets the earth. We have got heaven, and that is far better. And so, I say that those who go to the Old Testament and say, “That applies to us,” are very like poachers. You know poachers are never very easy in their work, they are always afraid of being disturbed; and so if I have to go to the Old Testament scriptures to find what belongs to me, it is perfectly clear I am not distinct, in my own soul, as to what belongs to me as a believer.

But before going further, permit me just to ask you, Are you a Christian? Oh, you say, that is a very plain question. Then let it have an honest answer now. But what do you mean by a Christian? you ask. I mean by a Christian a person that really knows Christ — not a person that knows something about Him, but a person that really knows Christ as his own Saviour. A Christian man is one who knows the rejected and once slain, but now raised, and glorified Saviour at God’s right hand, and is connected with, and united to, that risen Saviour, where He now is. A Christian is a man who is born again of God, whose sins are all forgiven — all blotted out, and who has received the Holy Spirit, and knows it. If you can only say, “I hope this is all mine,” you are not a true Christian in the proper sense of the word; and, let me tell you frankly, you have not got hold of the real essence of Christianity yet.

A Christian is a man that is indissolubly connected with the victorious risen Saviour. He is linked to the One who went down first of all into death for him, bore his sins, blotted them all out, met all the claims of God, in righteousness, in respect of those sins, and that Saviour is risen without a single sin, and has gone into God’s presence, to prepare a place, and take him to it.

The blessing of the believer is this — he knows his sins are forgiven, he knows he is saved, and knows God is his Father; he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, and he is a person standing on the other side of death and judgment, waiting, at the return of the Bridegroom, for glory. Do you not see, that if your heart is perfectly at peace before God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the enjoyment of what Christ has wrought for you, you are free to turn round then, and see how God is going to bless other people? The reason why we can happily think of Israel’s restoration is because we know ourselves so wonderfully and absolutely blessed of God. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you are loved eternally, and, more than that, you are fitted for glory, and you belong to that Saviour, who is coming to take you to the spot, where He Himself is. You see the Christian has everything perfectly clear for eternity, he has a title to glory without a flaw, and he has a prospect before him without a cloud. Are you, I repeat, a Christian? Have you that title to glory without a flaw? What is that title? The precious blood of Christ — nothing more, and nothing less. If you say, I am resting on that blood, then thank God that you have such a title. And there is something more — a prospect without a cloud. But, you say, there is judgment coming. Not for you and me, not for us. Whoever may go through the tribulation, the Church of Christ never will. The Lord’s word is distinct upon that point. There is not a cloud in our horizon. Why? Because everything is settled. Every possible question that could be raised between the soul and God is settled, and the only thing we are waiting for, is the Saviour to come for us, and receive us to Himself. I do not want a better prospect. You cannot give me one. That is what entrances the heart.

I tell you that my Saviour may be here tonight, and that I may meet Him in the air. What can be more blessed than that? But if you do not know the Saviour, and do not possess that title, then your prospect has got nothing but clouds in it, and I am going to show you some of them. If you are an unsettled, and hesitating soul, if you do not yet know the Lord, remember, that while I speak of that which specifically relates to

the Jews, it may have distinct application to you also. You will find that although the hottest bit of the furnace of tribulation may be at Jerusalem, yet the tip of the flame will touch all the world. There will be no mercy in that day for the man who has refused the Gospel. Now is the day of mercy. I recommend you to get it.

Turn now to the prophecy itself (Dan. 9:24-27) for a moment, and we shall see what was unfolded to Daniel, as he was looking to God about his people. He hears this, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people.” Look what an immense amount is to take place in these seventy weeks — I believe they are weeks of years, not weeks of days. You find, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, (1) to finish the transgression, (2) and to make an end of sins, (3) and to make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) and to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) and to seal up the vision and prophecy, (6) and to anoint the most Holy,” — to replace everything that the godly Jew desired; and as this opened out before Daniel’s soul, I can imagine how his heart was filled, to have it all brought about in seventy weeks; the Temple rebuilt and the Holy of Holies there. But listen, “Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince, shalt be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” When was that commandment issued? It was in the days of Nehemiah. It was in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, that this took place, four hundred and fifty-four years before the birth of Jesus. For the detail of this edict read the 2nd chapter of Nehemiah, verses 5-9. The first seven weeks (forty-nine years) were really occupied with the building of the city and the wall, “in troublous times,” after the coming back of the remnant from Babylon. “And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and have nothing” (margin). That is, counting from the end of the first seven weeks, right on to the end of the sixty-ninth week, you come down to Messiah’s death, four hundred and eighty-three years from the date of Nehemiah’s commission.

Four hundred and eighty-three years from the going forth of the edict to build the wall, was the very time when was fulfilled the word, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zech. 9:9). Jesus presented Himself thus to the Jewish nation, “lowly, and riding upon an ass,” and was “cut off and had nothing.” He came into Jerusalem fulfilling prophecy. He came in on the Monday of the last week of His life. He had been anointed in Bethany over night by Mary — she knew the King — and the children say, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” but the chief priests and the scribes “were sore displeased.” Ah, the children knew what the parents did not. Three days afterward He was betrayed, and on the following day was slain, and what took place? Israel’s hopes were dashed to the ground, for the Messiah was cut off, and had nothing.

The next prophecy evidently refers to the Romans and to Jerusalem, “And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” Observe, it is “the people of the prince that shall come.” The prince, I apprehend, has not yet come, for he is to be the chief actor in the seventieth week, which has not yet arrived, but his people (the Romans), nevertheless, came and destroyed Jerusalem, but not until A.D. 70. “And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm a (not the) covenant with the many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate (or, a desolator), even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Dan. 9:26- 27).

Now, you might turn and say, that week is fulfilled. No, because what Scripture brings out is this, that with the death of Christ, God ceases altogether to count time, God’s relations with His earthly people were stopped, the link was snapped, the chain was divided, and there has come in the long interval of

Christianity, commencing with the descent of the Holy Spirit, and closing with the coming again of the Lord Jesus, as the Bridegroom, to gather up His bride, the Church, to meet Him in the air. When that takes place, when this parenthesis, in which you and I live, is over, you will find that Daniel’s seventieth week will be fulfilled; the links of the broken chain are picked up, and God puts the two ends together, and what do you find then going on again? Israel’s history. Get clearly and distinctly in your mind what I mean. I hope everybody understands. I have no doubt in my own mind as to what God means. The point to note, is this, that after the sixty-ninth week Messiah was cut off, and then Israel was for the time being set aside, and the secret thought of God from eternity — the Church — came out. God’s work, since Pentecost, has been but little among the Jews — and that not nationally, but chiefly among the Gentiles, calling souls out of each, and forming them into “one new man,” — the Church; but the moment this work of grace is over, and there is brought in the last soul that believes the Gospel — and it might be this night that the last believer in Jesus is being laid hold of by the energy of the Spirit of God — then the Lord Jesus will come again, and we who know Him, rise to meet Him in the air, the living changed, the dead taken out of their graves, and what then? Israel comes again to the front; God again picks up the chain, if I may say so, and the seventieth week of Daniel is fulfilled.

“The people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” It was the last empire, the Roman empire, that slew the Lord, and destroyed the city, and it will be the Roman empire, revived by Satanic power, that, in the day yet to come, will oppress the Jew, and will be the real foe of God’s people in the time of which the seventieth week of Daniel so solemnly treats. I believe the prince in that verse has never arrived yet. He is the beast with the ten horns, the revived Imperial head of the Roman empire, who, along with the false prophet, antichrist, will yet crush down God’s ancient people.

The end of verse 26 doubtless alludes to what took place shortly after the death of the Lord. That death broke the link between God and His people, and since then they have lost their national place. A perfect flood of troubles broke on them, as it says, “And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” Again, “The king... sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (Matt. 22:7). This is no part of the seventy weeks.

The 27th verse carries us up to the close, and gives us the seventieth week. Here the long interregnum of Christianity ends, and we read, “He,” that is the coming Roman prince — not the Lord Jesus — “shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (vs. 17). The Jews will be gathered back into their own land, with the temple rebuilt, the sacrifices reestablished, and their old customs, feast days, and rites going on, and then they get under the protection of this western political power, that is, the revived Roman empire. A covenant is made with “Me many,” the mass of the nation; the remnant declining it, and having no part in it. “In the midst of the week” this covenant is broken. “He shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease.” The object of this is plain. Antichrist having effected, first of all, the complete obliteration of every remaining trace in Christendom of what was, or pretended to be, the worship of Jesus — the Christian’s God — will not be content till he has driven out of the earth every testimony to Jehovah, the God of the Jew. The Lord having come for the Church, and the Holy Spirit being removed, then the mystery of iniquity works, the

man of sin appears, thenceforth every vestige of what you and I are accustomed to think of as Christianity will be set aside, and then the Lord will send them a strong delusion, and they will believe a lie.

But there is a portion of God's earth still left, where the name of Jehovah is known, and the God of the Jew still owned, and worshipped. The Jews are gathered to their own land, and they are worshipping the God of their fathers, according to their idea. What is the next thing? ' I must get rid of that also,' says Satan, and great will be his satisfaction when he can say, I have made clear riddance of every vestige of the testimony to Jehovah, I have got rid of Christ in Christendom, and I have replaced the true Christ by antichrist. When he shall have turned out every vestige of worship of the true God in Judaea, then he will be content. The enemy's great design appears to have succeeded, for a man — himself but Satan's tool and dupe — has usurped God's place upon the earth. That is the moment when God begins to assert His rights. The patience of God is wonderful. If either you or I had had the government of this world in our hands, we should have wound the business up long ago. There is not a man here tonight who would have gone on as long with it, for if he had had the power, he would have exercised it long ere this, and set things right according to his own mind. But I repeat, the patience of God is wonderful.

Now, however, when idolatry is once more upheld in what professes to be His temple, the long-suffering patience of God with man on the earth is ended. The reason is here given, "And for (or on account of) the wing of abominations, a desolator, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." The covenant is broken, the sacrifice and oblation caused to cease, and the wing of protection flung over the "abomination" — the well-known Old Testament term for idolatry. In plain language, you have clearly predicted here the solemn fact, that there will yet be idolatry in the spot where Jesus died, in Jerusalem, and in what purports to be Jehovah's temple. Idolatry there will undoubtedly be, according to the 12th of Daniel (vs. 11) and our Lord's own words in Matthew 24:15-16: "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains."

"The abomination that maketh desolate" is this: Antichrist, the beast with two horns, the simulator of Jesus, will make an image to the beast with ten horns (see Rev. 13:11-18). He will make the image of his friend, with whom he is working in confederacy, and he will have the power to make that image speak, and compel people to worship it. In plain language, compulsory idolatry springs up again, and then God sends, in retributive judgment, the "flood." What is called the "flood" in verse 26 is called the "desolator" in verse 27. I regard this as the Assyrian. Because idols are taken under the protection of "the prince that shall come," God sends "a desolator," "an overflowing scourge" on Jerusalem — here spoken of, as "the desolate." The prince, although he has broken the covenant, is still the patron and head of the nation, and his minion is the false prophet — antichrist — who will have his seat in Jerusalem, as the great arch-priest of the idolatrous worship offered to the image in the temple of God. As a result God sends down the "flood," or the "desolator." The one referred to by these two figures is the Assyrian, or "king of the north," the foe outside the land. Antichrist is the enemy of the righteous Jews within; the Assyrian, from without. Thus the remnant are exposed, so to speak, to a double fire of diabolical persecution.

Other scriptures speak of this moment, particularly Isaiah 28:2: "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand." This verse flings light on the 9th of Daniel. Further down in Isaiah 28:14, you find the covenant also spoken of: "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." That is, the Roman emperor will make a covenant with the ungodly mass of the restored Jews. That covenant is an unholy covenant, and he breaks it, and God will then step in, and bitterly chastise them, because of their sin, first of all, in the rejection of Jesus, as their Messiah, and secondly, because of their acceptance of antichrist. Mark it well, if men do not have the true Christ, they are bound to accept the false one. Man is not independent, and self-supporting, and therefore, when antichrist comes, with his delusions, and wiles, he will be accepted, and received, above all in Jerusalem, where, of course, his throne will be. God's indignation is thereon expressed against these last representatives of the Christ-rejecting portion of Israel, and on them will fall His dire judgments, the Assyrian being used as "the rod of mine anger" (Isa. 10:5).

But now what about the tribulation? Well, here is the whole point. It is because of the sad moral condition of the nation, at that moment, that God pours forth the judgment, of which Scripture thus speaks, and if any of you have any doubt as to this special time, I must refer you briefly to other scriptures, both in the Old and New Testaments, which point out this state of matters. Look first at the 30th chapter of Jeremiah, where you will find, first of all, the statement that God will restore His people, and then, what will be effected, when they are restored. "For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it" (Jer. 30:3).

Concerning Israel and Judah, you must not forget that the kingdom, in the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, had been divided. The ten tribes that went off with Jeroboam are usually spoken of, by the prophets of the Old Testament, as "Israel" or "Ephraim," and you will have pointed out, later in this course of lectures, that Scripture speaks most distinctly as to the different dealing of God with the ten tribes and the two tribes. Here we have merely the fact brought out, "I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah." The ten tribes were taken into captivity long before Judah. Where they are, at this day, I do not know, and no one knows. There has been a great effort to make out that the English-speaking race, and specially the Christians thereof, are the ten tribes, but I demur to this, because I do not think there is a shadow of ground, in Scripture, for this theory. I am quite willing to admit this, that if a man wants to prove any absurdity he can always get some wrested scripture, dislocated from its connection, to support him. But what destroys the whole force of the theory to me, is this, that the acme of the beauty and blessedness of Christianity is, that we are going to heavenly glory with Christ. We are not going to live on the earth. Thank God, no. When the time comes to go hence, the Lord has given us something far better than earth. Let the Jew have his portion, and we will give it to him freely, and therefore if anybody comes and says, You are the house of Israel, do not you believe it; because even if an Israelite were converted now, he ceases, as a believer in Jesus, to be a Jew, and becomes a member of the body of Christ.

I truly confess, beloved friends, that the day when I say "good-bye" to the earth, I shall say, from the bottom of my heart, Thank God. If the Lord came tonight, we should break out, as we left the earth behind, into that noble paean, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord

Jesus Christ." We are going to be changed into the likeness of Christ, and to be with Him forever. Heaven, not earth, is our home. I would not be anything but a Christian for ten thousand worlds; and it you are not one, it is high time you became one.

But, with regard to the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, we read, "And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel, and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man cloth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:4-7). The time of Jacob's trouble is the time when the Jews, regathered, will be brought under this solemn judgment of God. "For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him; but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity: and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (vss. 8-10). Then in the 18th verse, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small" (vss. 18, 19). Abundant other scriptures give the same testimony as to their restoration, but this one I refer to because it speaks of the time of "Jacob's trouble," and of the solemn character of that day.

Now go to the 12th chapter of Daniel, and you will find the same time marked out. It is in the last, or seventieth week, at the close of the time spoken of as the forty-two months, the last half of the seventieth week of Daniel. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (vss. 1-3). Here, see, we have the remnant teaching the mass righteousness, if they will learn. But, someone says, I thought that was the resurrection. So it is, but it is not the resurrection of the body; it is the resurrection of the nation of Israel. This use of resurrection, as a figure of blessed restoration from national ruin, is not uncommon in Old Testament Scripture. Compare with this passage Isaiah 26, where Israel's trouble under Gentile lords is described. In verse 19 the Lord says, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." They are yet to be delivered from Gentile thralldom. Again, Ezekiel 37:1-14, speaks of Israel as not only dead, but buried nationally. There God says, "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel" (vs. 12). Jeremiah shows us then the time of Jacob's trouble, whereas Daniel lets us know that it will be a time of trouble of which the like was never known before.

Now come to the scripture, which I read at the beginning of the meeting, Matthew 24, and you will find our Lord comments upon that time in the most remarkable way. Having detailed all the surrounding circumstances of that day, He says in verse 15, "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand): then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days I But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." What does the shortening of those days refer to? It carries you back to another scripture in the book of Daniel12:11, "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." That is more than a thousand two hundred and sixty; it is three and a half years and one month more. That is, the end of the seventieth week will scarcely bring in the contemplated blessing, they must hold out in their trouble and wait thirty days longer; and then Daniel adds, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." That is another forty-five days further on. At that moment, when God puts His hand to things, He does not take very long about it. After the seventieth week closes, another month will produce wonderful effects, and at the end of the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days the reign of the Son of Man will be established.

But the Lord, in speaking to His disciples here in Matthew, says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." The moment they see idolatry in Jerusalem, let them take refuge where they can, because He tells us in the 21st verse, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." There never has been such trouble, and there never shall again be such trouble, as at that moment, and for the reason that idolatry is sanctioned, maintained, and protected, in what is ostensibly the temple of God. But you may say, I thought Christians always had trouble. Well, no doubt, we do get it, and it does not do us any harm, but always good. Whenever there is a bit of sharp persecution, you will always find that the saints are very bright and happy, and very bold in their testimony for the Lord; but when everything is quiet they are apt to go to sleep. It is quite true that "in the world ye shall have tribulation," for our Lord says so. What then are we to do? Run away from it The Lord alone can guide us at the moment. Here, however, there is clear instruction for an earthly people, in peculiar circumstances, at a special moment of coming trial. "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days I But pray ye that your flight be not in winter, neither on the sabbath-day." Why not on the Sabbath day? Because the Jew could not, under the law, go beyond a Sabbath day's journey — not quite half a mile — on the Sabbath day. No Christian would think that there is anything wrong in traveling ten times that distance, on the Lord's Day, if it were to serve the Lord, say in preaching the Gospel. Not that the two days are identical, because I claim for the Lord's Day a far higher sanctity than ever was accorded to the Sabbath. The Lord's Day is the day that marks Christianity, and the Sabbath is what was connected with Judaism, and it is a remarkable fact that the Lord spent the Sabbath day in the grave.

There is great grace in the Lord's desiring that no obstacle might be in the way of those who were bid to flee then — "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be," and so forth. He gives them further warning not to listen to this man, or that, because they have then distinctly to understand, that, at that moment, He is, Himself, coming to their

rescue. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days,” He says, “shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (vss. 29, 30). I know that expositors have attempted to explain these verses, by saying their fulfillment was the Romans taking Jerusalem. But on the very face of it, we cannot accept that. The Romans did not come from the cast, but from the west — “As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together” (vss. 27, 28). What is the carcass? Corrupt, dead Judaism.

If you turn now to Mark 13, you will there find identical testimony as to the tribulation. “For in those days shall be affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days” (vss. 19, 20). We have read two distinct statements in the Old Testament Scriptures as to this special time of trouble; and you have the two evangelists, Matthew and Mark, each speaking of it, specifically, as a special time, and then, in the Revelation, you have confirmatory testimony. Turn there for one moment, and you will see exactly who they are who go through, and come out of “the great tribulation.” Read the 7th chapter. The first half is occupied with telling you, that there were sealed twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel — God will have His own testimony — and you have therefore this limited number — one hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel. Then in the 9th verse we read: “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number” — it is refreshing in its largeness — “of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” I confess I do not like to have to spoil a happy, and pretty illusion, but truth demands it. Many, perhaps, at some time, all of us have thought this was heaven, but we must give that thought up; it is not a heavenly, it is an earthly, scene, and company.

But I hear some one saying, Oh, but I thought this meant us Christians. Thank God, it is not us. We have something infinitely better. This scene is enacted on the earth. We see first, Israel’s remnant blessed on the earth, and then we get those countless white-robed Gentile multitudes on the earth. They have to do with God now, in the enjoyment of His grace; they are in definite relationship with God, and they have also palms in their hands — they are victorious. They are seen standing before, not around the throne, and they ascribe salvation to God, on the throne, and to the Lamb. Who the “elders” are here, you can learn from Revelation, 4th and 5th chapters. The four and twenty elders represent the heavenly saints. We are supposed to understand all about that day, for God is giving us light about it in this day. We are to know it now. The saint of Christ, the saint of heaven, is supposed to understand all about the earth, because his heart is so free, and happy, in the enjoyment of what he possesses himself, that he is able to think of, and be interested in, what is going on in the earth.

Now, in proof of this statement, observe — “One of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7:13-17). They had come out of the great tribulation. They had been true to God, and faithful in it, and their robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb. They were cleansed ones, owned to be such, hence are always before the throne, a special class, and serve God day and night in His temple. This at once distinguishes them from the Church, the heavenly saints. There is no temple in Revelation 21:22, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple. This white-robed multitude have a priestly place, in the temple, on this earth, and they will have the deep consolations of God, worth all the sorrows they have passed through. It is a lovely picture of how, after the tribulation, God brings them into perfect blessing on earth.

The Church of God, the body of Christ, will not go through the tribulation. There have not been wanting those who have asserted that she will, but to any simple believer the distinct, absolute statement of the blessed Lord, to the overcomer, in Philadelphia, settles that finally. In the 3rd chapter of Revelation and 10th verse, we get this lovely word — “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from (out of, not in) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Thus while the 7th chapter distinctly brings out who will be passing through, and coming out of, the great tribulation, namely, all those that are blessed of God in Israel, and likewise an innumerable company from among the Gentiles — we see the other side in this 3rd chapter, and learn who will not go through it — the Church, the Bride of Christ. Will the Christian pass through it? No; “because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.” Jesus, as it were, says, You have known Me, you have loved Me, and I am going to come for you before that day sets in. “Behold I come quickly.” Beloved friends, how blessed thus to hear His sweet voice speaking to us. I ask you, are you among this number, that have believed in His name, have heard His voice, and are waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven? Are you ready, are you prepared, are you His? If not, let me say as I close, Oh! turn to Him now, and escape that tribulation. Get into the very presence of God now, into the enjoyment of His own grace. Approach now, trust, and know the Lord Jesus, as the risen Saviour, and then wait for Him, as the coming Bridegroom.

Behold the Bridegroom, Stone Cut Without Hands, The

Daniel 2:34-35; Revelation 19

We had occasion, beloved friends, on a previous night, to look at the 2nd chapter of Daniel, in connection with the times of the Gentiles, and many of you will remember, that we saw brought out in the book of Daniel, the history of Gentile power in this world, commencing in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, and successively passing from the Babylonian empire to the Medo-Persian, then to the Grecian, and finally to the Roman. Then, in Nebuchadnezzar’s great image, we saw the head, of gold, the breast and arms, of silver, the belly and the thighs, of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet, part of iron, and part of clay. It was a tale of deterioration right down. Now you will observe, in the verses I read this evening, that the stone that fell, did not fall on the head, nor on the breast, nor on the belly, but on the feet, that is, that whatever might be designed by God as the interpretation of the feet, made part of iron, and part of clay, it was upon the feet that the stone fell.

I have no doubt, as before stated, that the image gives us a continuous view of “the times of the Gentiles,” that is, the time in which God gives the Gentiles power on the earth, the Jew, for the while, being set aside. But there is a moment coming when God will change everything, and we find it indicated here in the 44th and 45th verses. This really happens in the closing days of the Roman empire, the revived Roman empire, for it does not now exist as such. But we learn from Scripture that that empire, which has now ceased to dominate the world, will be revived by Satanic energy in a day, I believe, near at hand, and it will have immense power, particularly in Europe — where, of course, its seat will be.

It will have great power, and it will be a bitter foe to all that is connected with God, whether under the name of Christianity, or Judaism, and it is that power, which is first dealt with by the Lord, when He returns in glory. You must not forget that it was under the Roman power, and by its decree, that He died. It was the Roman governor that said, “What shall I do then with Jesus, whom ye call Christ?” You must not forget that it was the Roman authority that signed His death-warrant. It was under the Romans that Jesus died, and John suffered, and it will be that same power, revived, that will be dominating things very much in the world, when the moment arrives of which the 2nd chapter of Daniel speaks, and there comes this remarkable intervention of God, “the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands.”

That stone falls, and smites the image upon his feet, and the result is that it is all reduced to powder, and the whole thing disappears. Then we find “the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” I am perfectly well aware that many expositors of the Word of God have endeavored to make out that this is the Gospel. I do not see how they make it out at all, because I do not think the Gospel is very destructive, as this falling stone most certainly is, and, moreover, I ask you this, Did the Gospel ever smite the image? Never, the image smote Christ. It was the Roman power that slew the Lord Jesus. The Gospel has never set aside the civil power in this world; on the contrary, the Gospel has always suffered, and will suffer right on to the end. But what we have here is, that there comes a power that sets aside every human empire, and then is introduced an everlasting kingdom. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” God sets up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. There can be no shadow of a doubt this refers to what Scripture speaks abundantly of elsewhere, “The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11), in the moment when He comes back to earth, to assume the reins of government, which He alone is worthy to hold.

What we read in the 19th of Revelation carries us up to that point. That chapter introduces us to the moment when He, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, returns, as Son of Man, to assert His rights, and when God will establish them, and there shall be brought in a kingdom that shall never pass away. I will speak another evening of the nature and character of that kingdom, but, tonight, I just want to show you, if I can, how it comes in, and what will be the salient features of that day. It is indeed a blessed character that God gives to the kingdom — it never passes away. The fact is that there never has been a king, in this world, that has not — sooner or later — lost his crown, and there never has been a kingdom but what has been upset, or is going to be; but what God is about to do is to bring in a King, who shall never be uncrowned, and a kingdom, that shall never be set aside. The kingdom shall extend from pole to pole, and the King does not lose the crown, nor have it taken from Him, either by a usurper, or by death. Nevertheless, the moment will come when that throne which He has filled so blessedly for a thousand years, He will abdicate, as man, and lay down the crown voluntarily, which, as man, His peerless brow has borne, unsullied, during the ages of His mediatorial and universal sway, so that God may be all in all, for eternity. The history of the first man is this, he sought to rise — to get up to God’s level, and he fell to Satan’s, he was abased. The history of the last Man is this, that when He comes to assert His rights as Son of Man, and has put down every foe, He gives all up, that God may be all in all.

Scripture speaks abundantly of the return of the Lord Jesus in this way. We must not, however, confound the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His heavenly people, with the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ with His attendant hosts. That which we look for, as Christians, is the return of the Lord Jesus for us. We shall rise to meet Him, and we shall go and be with Him, in the Father’s house, and then we shall come with the Lord, when He returns to the earth in power and glory. That He will so come there can be no manner of doubt. Just turn to one or two parts of Scripture by way of confirmation. In the 24th of Matthew, we have already seen the Lord distinctly speaking of His appearing — His revelation, verse 30, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” He is about to come to the earth in that character. Then turn to Matthew 26, where He is standing before the high priest. They had Him, who is going to be the Judge of all the earth, dragged before man’s bar, and see what takes place. “The high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto Him, Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (vss. 62-64). When the Lord is put upon oath, He answers. Up to that moment He was silent, but put upon oath He immediately responds. He, as Son of Man, was to come with every surrounding of power, and glory, conferred on Him by God, “Sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” That moment has not yet come, but thank God, it is coming. When He does come in that character, of course it will be in relation to the earth, and in judgment thereof.

Turn now to the 19th of Revelation, and you will get a general view of what will be the characteristics of the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Recollect it is to deal with the earth, in order to put down all opposing power on the earth, and that is the great point that the Spirit of God brings out in the 19th chapter. But there are a few points that I must touch upon, before going into that, viz., what the early part of the chapter brings out.

You will observe that this chapter opens with a great movement in heaven — “After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Hallelujah,” and so forth. Now, what produced the praise? It is clearly the judgment of which the 18th chapter speaks — the fail of Babylon. You have there the judgment of the false Church — the false bride you may call it if you please — and you have now the coming out in glory of the real Bride, the Bride of Christ. In the 18th chapter the judgment, upon earth, of what is false, immediately precedes this moment, when the marriage of the Lamb takes place, and the Bridegroom and the Bride together appear, when He comes out, in kingly character, as Son of Man to deal with the earth.

It is important to bear in mind that, in the main, what the book of Revelation gives you, up to this point, are the providential judgments of God, that are preparatory to what the 19th chapter ushers in. I believe that in the opening of the seven seals, and the sounding of the seven trumpets (chaps. 6-11), as well as in the pouring out of the vials (chap. 16.), you have given to you — sometimes in mystical language — those desolating temporal judgments, with which this whole earth will be overwhelmed, previous to the appearing of the Son of Man; and if

any of you are unsaved, and want to know what you are hastening on to, I recommend you, without delay, to read these chapters straight through, and you will have a very fair idea of what your portion is to be, if not caught up at the rapture. If the Lord Jesus came now, if the true saints were called up at this moment into glory, I will tell you what you would have to face immediately thereafter. You would find the first seal (chap. 6) begun to be broken, before you were at all aware.

In the 4th of Revelation you have the creatorial glories of Christ. In the 5th you have the redemption glories of Jesus, and there you see Him, as the Lamb slain, in the midst of the throne. The cry is sent forth, “Who is worthy to open the book?” In the hand of God there is a roll. That roll contains the purposes and counsels of God with regard to the earth. There goes out this challenge, “Who is worthy? John says, “I wept much.” He knew he was not worthy himself, and he looked for some one to come up who was worthy. Would not Joseph, Moses, Samuel, or Elijah come? Nay, neither patriarch, priest, nor prophet was worthy; nor Peter, nor Paul, nor himself; and he “wept much.” Then, what takes place? The Lion of the Tribe of Juda prevails. John turns round to look for the Lion, and he says, “Lo, in the midst of the throne, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” There you may see Jesus, the Saviour — my Saviour! Your Saviour? Oh, my friends, hurry to Him, if He is not yet your Saviour. Get ready for Him. But we read, “He came, and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.” And as Jesus puts forth His hand to take the roll, what does heaven see? It sees the mark of the nail, that tells of His death on the cross, and all in heaven together bow, and sing, “Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” What has led you to worship Jesus? Because He died for you.

There is no one worthy but Jesus to unfold the mind of God, or to execute the purposes of God. He therefore takes the book. I must not dwell upon that, but let me ask, Are you sure to be with Him when He takes the book, and breaks the seals? If you are not, whither are you going? As you sit tonight, you are either a glory-bound saint, or a hell-bound sinner. You say, That is drawing the line very fine. Well, grant it, but I am not drawing the line finer than God does. A glory-bound saint! Oh, how blessed! That is a remarkable expression; I like it — a man bound for glory through the grace of God. If I am not that, what am I? I am on my road to hell, as surely as I face you this night. Oh say some people, we cannot be sure of salvation. Do not be deceived by the devil that way. You ought to be sure. If you never were sure before, I implore you to be sure now, because He died for us, and there is the song in glory — “Thou wast slain, and thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” Perhaps you say, They learned that up there. No, they learned it on earth, and if you do not learn that song on earth, you will never learn it. There is no redemption after death; there is no pardon in the tomb; and there is no forgiveness for the man, who has heard, and despised the Gospel, after the Lord has come, and the door is shut. You may, and you had better, learn that song now

What is the next thing? The 6th of Revelation opens with the fact that the Lamb begins to break the seals. He is about to begin to deal with the earth. I believe, in point of fact, that what we have in Revelation 4 and 5, and in chapters 6, 7, and 8, and onwards, are concurrent. Chapters 4 and 5 are what I may call the high level, and the 6th, and so forth, give us the low level. The two are going on together. The one is a heavenly, and the other an earthly scene. The worship meeting in heaven of chapter 5 is concurrent with the prayer meeting on earth, of the 6th chapter of Revelation. But what is the prayer meeting on earth? In verse 15 we find “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of Hhis wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” I do not believe the day of the Lord really has come then, but conscience terrifies men into thinking it has come. I do not believe the “day of the Lord” has actually set in then, it is only the gathering of the clouds. But, O beloved friends, there is many a man in Christendom today, who never bent his knees at a prayer meeting, that will be found at a prayer meeting yet, beseeching — not God for mercy on his guilty soul, but — the rocks and the hills to fall upon him. These are God’s solemn statements, and yet I repeat, not yet has the day of the Lord set in. It is only what is coming, acting on conscience, guilty conscience. Man wakes up, and feels he is in an awful case, and flies, if he can, to get away from God, in the dens of the earth. You remember our Lord

Jesus Christ prophesied this prayer meeting in Luke 23, “Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (vss. 28-51.) What the Lord predicts, in the moment of His willing self-sacrifice for guilty man, that he might be saved from judgment, we find fully brought out in the 6th of Revelation.

From the Revelation 6 to the end of Revelation 18, broadly speaking, you have brought before you the providential dealings of God, in judgment, with man upon the earth, which lead up to the final climax, which is the appearing of the Man that the world does not want to see. If you could only certify to the world that the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Father, the Living God, were dead, and buried, and never would have anything more to say to the earth, I believe that the world would take a general holiday.

But God yet lives, Jesus lives, and it is well to remind the world that God “hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

The One who died on the cross eighteen hundred years ago, died for our sins, and was raised for our justification, has passed into glory, and the heavens have concealed Him for eighteen long centuries. God has had long patience with man, but the day is appointed, and the Lord will come out again, according to the testimony of the 19th of Revelation, to which I again turn. Joy fills the arches of heaven’s courts in that day, because the time has come when the whore with all her children are cast into the fire. That is her judgment. Babylon falls, in the 18th chapter, and then heaven rejoices, because the moment is coming of earth’s deliverance.

Then, just before the Lord comes out, there is brought before our view something peculiarly blessed to the Christian. I cannot pass it over, because it is what I may call our own unique portion. A wonderfully blessed place will all believers in Jesus have in the day when the Lord comes out. Let us read it. “And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready” (Rev. 19:5-7). The great multitude anticipates what is coming, and heaven goes into an ecstasy, because they see that the moment has come, when the Lord is going to put forth His hand to clear sin from the earth, and set things right; and heaven, after six thousand years of patient waiting, says, “Hallelujah for the Lord our God, the Almighty, has taken to himself Kingly

power" (vs. 6, New Trans.). But before He comes out in glory, they add, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (vs. 7). What a wonderful thing, heaven goes into an ecstasy over the marriage of the Lamb. There was another time when heaven was equally moved, when the angelic messenger came and told the shepherds, "I bring you tidings of great joy.... for unto you is born this day ... . a Saviour which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Immediately there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, and they were all praising God. Heaven went into an ecstasy when Jesus was born, because it now saw a way for man to be saved. The problem of four thousand years, how man could be saved, was now settled by the birth of the Son of God, the Saviour, who was going to die for sinners like you and me. Yes, joy filled heaven that day, and here is the other side of it. He came down, He was born, He lived, He was refused, rejected, abhorred of the people, and despised of the Gentiles, and at length cast out. A robber was preferred to Jesus, the Son of God, a murderer rather than a Saviour. The world took Him forth, crowned with thorns, and slew Him on the tree. All that Jesus got from this world was to be born in one man's manger, to die on another man's cross, and to be buried in another man's tomb. The world has well-nigh forgotten His existence, and would entirely but for the Holy Spirit's testimony; and now there comes a moment, after eighteen hundred years have gone by, when there is to be an end to His waiting, and a reward for His toil, and heaven is in deepest sympathy with His joy, and says, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev. 19:7-8).

A rapturous moment, for the Bridegroom and the Bride has come. Who is the Bride? I have no doubt who the Bride is. There are others looking on, who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (see verse 9), but these are the guests — they are not the Bride. But who is the Bride? There is not a believer in this hall tonight, that does not form part of the Bride of Christ; there has not been one believing soul on earth, from the day of Pentecost, right on to the moment when the Lord comes back for His people, that does not form an integral part of the Bride. On the day of the marriage, the heavenly Bridegroom wants the whole Bride, He does not take a part of her. If you are going to limit the Bride, as some would, to a few faithful living Christians, you have to leave Peter and Paul out. Are we going to leave them out? Nay, the Bride is composed of all that belong to the Lord, from the day of Pentecost, to the day of the rapture. When the last soul is converted, and, by being sealed with the Holy Spirit, is brought into the body of Christ, that body is complete. The Bride is also then complete, and observe, you will find always that the Bride is connected with glory. When I come to think of eternal glory, then it is, that we specially hear of the Bridegroom and the Bride, terms that call up, and foster in our hearts, those holy and blessed affections that befit such a relationship.

But observe how the Bride is appareled here. She is "arrayed in fine linen clean and bright; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (vs. 8). What are we to learn from this? "Fine linen" or "white raiment" (Rev. 3:18), would appear, in the Word, to be the figure of practical righteousness in the saint, as "gold" is divine righteousness, in which we stand before God. It is, I judge, connected with reward, though the fruit of perfect grace. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love" (Heb. 6:10). This will be the outcome of going before the judgment-seat of Christ, which precedes the marriage day. Although you and I, if believers, can never be judged for our sins — Jesus having been judged for them — yet, as believers, we shall have to give an account to the Lord, by and by, of all our actions here. We shall go before the judgment-seat of Christ, and if we have served the Lord, He will reward us. I believe that when our whole history has come under review before the Lord, we shall come out, deeply thankful, to have gone over it with Him.

I do not think you will be concerned about my history, but only about your own. I shall be very troubled about what will come out then, some one may say. Nay, I will tell you one thing that will come out, you will find that you have been put into glory, in the likeness of Christ. Will you have any objection to review that? Guilt can never be imputed to us, because it has been already imputed to Christ. He died for our sins, and Christ is, then, as now, our righteousness, and our ground for appearing in the presence of God. Nevertheless, when before the Lord, it will be a very blessed, though withal a very solemn thing, to review what His grace was to us here, in our earthly pathway. At that moment, when I get before the judgment-seat of Christ, the Lord will, I judge, take me over the whole of my history. Looking back on my life, as an unconverted man, I see, so to speak, a long, dark, black, inky river of nothing but self-will, and sin, and then I come to a point when His grace began to work in my heart, and I see a little bright silvery streak coming in, the first touch of the Spirit of God on my soul. And then the stream of grace begins to widen a little, and the inky stream of self-will, and active sin, to diminish. Thus I retrace the whole of my history, seeing my failures, and my faults, and the Lord's patience; and grace with me; what a fool I was here, and how grace helped me there, and then I come right up to the end of the double stream, and I say, Here I am with Christ in glory. Oh what wondrous grace, me in glory! I think I shall turn and say, Where is my harp, that I may strike my hand across its strings, and praise the ever blessed, loving Lord, that brought me here. I would not miss that for worlds.

What we have been for Jesus here will be manifested there. Your service will come out there, and I tell you honestly, I believe I shall delight to look on then, and say, Look at that brother, what a blessed reward that saint has received, how brightly does his garment shine. Your practical righteousness here will follow you into heaven. This, you see, will make us careful down here as to our walk, and it is a very good thing that we should be careful. We are not trying to get salvation, or righteousness, to fit us for glory, we are only trying to be "rich in good works" (1 Tim. 6:17-19), which will follow us there.

The marriage of the Lamb having taken place, the Son of Man comes out, and who is with Him? You and I, fellow-believer, will be with Him. Many an earthly bridegroom and bride, have had to be separated, but we are to be forever with the Lord; with Him in the Father's house in glory, at the marriage supper, and when He comes out in majesty, and power, and glory. Will it not be deep joy to be with Him in that day?

The character of the Lord's appearing, as given here, is very striking. He comes out seated "on a white horse," the symbol in Scripture of victorious power, and similarly seated "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean," the armies of heaven follow Him. He is called "Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns" (vss. 11-12). The last time the world saw Him He was naked. They had stripped Him, and had gambled for His garments, beneath His dying eyes. The next time the world sees Him, how will it be? Oh, sinner, it will be an awful time for you. Unsaved man, if you are caught in that day, it will be a terrible time for you. "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and His name is called THE WORD OF GOD ... And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and He shall rule [shepherd] them with a rod of iron" (vss. 13-15).

When He rules we shall be with Him, in the day of His power. We who have known, and followed Him, in the day of His weakness, and rejection, shall be with Him, in the day of His manifested power, and glory.

But further, “He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” There is a difference seen clearly elsewhere in Scripture, between the harvest, and the vintage. Here He treads the wine press. Turn back to Revelation 14:15, and we read, “And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” You have there two things, the harvest and the vintage. What is the difference? The harvest clearly is connected with judgment, Christ reaps the earth — separating, gathering, and judging, but there is discrimination in the judgment of the Lord in that day. “There shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Luke 17:34-36). That is the principle of the harvest, because some righteous are to be found then. When the Lord treads the wine-press, He exercises un mingled vengeance upon the wicked, for the vintage is the moment when the final desolating judgment takes place, that is to say, the godly have been delivered, the harvest has been gathered, and what remains forms the vintage, and every bunch goes into the wine-press. It will be an awful day for the earth when the harvest is over. Then the rest are left to the judgment, that is expressed by the vintage.

I will here ask you to turn to other Scriptures, merely to refer to what is going to take place in that day. Look at Joel 3:9, where you will see clearly what the Lord will do. God summons the earth to try conclusions with Him. “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow: for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:9-14). It is a stupendous fact, that at that moment Jehovah comes, and deals with the nations of the earth, and men are obliged to bow down before God. There again we read that the “harvest is ripe,” and “the press is full.” Although a terrible, it will, at first, be a discriminating judgment.

Then look at Matthew 25:31-46, where you get, not the warrior judgment of Christ, but His sessional judgment, what you may call an assize. In this, His saints are associated with Him (Dan. 7:22; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 20:4). In the warrior judgment Christ is alone. “I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people none was with Me” (Isa. 63:3).

The 19th of Revelation gives us the warrior judgment of Christ — overcoming power — while sessional judgment we find in chapter 20 from verse 4. Now we read on “He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” He is thus publicly, and officially announced. “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Rev. 19:19-21). The impiety and daring folly of man rises to its full height, as we see gathered against Him the beast and his tributaries, “to make war against him.” There will be a tremendous effort on the part of man to resist God, but that effort results in nothing but overwhelming destruction. What takes place? The beast and the false prophet are taken, and are cast alive into the lake of fire. These two men — ringleaders in evil — get their final doom without death — they are cast into the lake of fire. That is not strange, for Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven without death. That was in Old Testament times of feeble light, and knowledge of God. Alas! it is reserved for two men, in New Testament times, when grace is abundant, and has been despised, to be cast alive into the lake of fire. They receive their final judgment, the rest are judicially “slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse.”

In the 25th of Matthew, familiar to every one of us, the Lord commences His sessional judgment, “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteousness into life eternal” (Matt. 25:31-46).

It will be a wonderful moment, and a deeply impressive scene. All His angels, and all His saints, form His retinue, and there never has been such an assemblage since the world began, and there never will again be such a concourse in the world’s history. The Son of man comes in His glory, and “then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.” But, some one may say, that is the same judgment, as the great white throne, is it not? No, dear friend, nothing of the sort. They who are judged here, are gathered before the Lord in nations, but people do not so rise from the dead. There are four judgments spoken of in Scripture. You have the judgment of sin on the cross, the judgment of the works of the Christian in glory, with Christ, when we are like Him. Then, here, we get the judgment of the living nations, which corresponds exactly to the 3rd of Joel, “Gather together all the heathen,” and so forth, and lastly, the judgment of the wicked dead, as given to us in Revelation 20:11-15.

Clearly the sheep in Matthew 25 are, in a certain sense, related to the Lord, and the goats are not, but both classes are living nations! Observe: “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Are these Christians? No, our blessing dates from “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). These are blessed from the foundation of the world. Observe also the ground of the judgment, namely, the treatment of the king’s brethren. The king answers and says unto the sheep, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Who are the brethren? Christians? No, certainly not Christians, the day of Christianity has gone by, it is the day when the Son of Man is dealing with the nations upon earth, and in that day, you do not get the three classes, Jew, Gentile, and the Church of God. The day of the Church of God is over. She has gone up into glory before this day. But we have Jew and Gentile. I was showing you, in my last lecture, how the Jew will carry forth the Gospel of the kingdom in the end of the age. The brethren here, I conclude, are the messengers. These sheep, who will be witnesses of the return of the Son of Man, are the believing Gentile nations who bow to the truth, while the goats are those who refuse the truth. It is not the great white throne. It is the Son of Man on the throne of His glory, dealing with the living nations on the earth, and judging them according to the way they have treated His messengers. The judgment of the great white throne will come before us on another occasion.

In this way then is the kingdom of the Son of Man established. Every foe is put down; for “the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.... Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 13:41-43). The beast and the false prophet; the Roman empire and its minion, with all their confederates, we have seen dealt with, but there is yet another foe of Israel to be set aside, ere the stone, cut out without hands, can fill the whole earth. That I reserve for our next lecture.

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