

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 24

Ver. 1. *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple*, etc.] He not only went out of it for that time, but took his final leave of it, never to return more to it; having foretold its desolation, which he, in part, by so doing, immediately fulfilled: this the disciples observing, and being intent on the outward splendour, and worldly grandeur of it, were concerned that so beautiful a structure should be deserted; and almost thought it incredible, that so strong, and firm a building could be destroyed.

And his disciples came unto him: as he went, and as soon as he was come out of the temple, and whilst in view of it:

for to show him the buildings of the temple; the walls of it, and courts adjoining to it, how beautiful and firm they were: whether this was done by them to raise in him admiration or commiseration, in hopes he might change the sentence he had passed upon it, is not easy to say; or whether this did not express their incredulity about the desolation of it; which Christ's answer, in the next verse, seems to imply. Mark says, it was "one of the disciples" that observed these to him, who might be accompanied with the rest, and in their name address him; and who, probably, might be Peter, since he was generally their mouth; and that he should speak to him in this manner: "master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here!" Luke says, "how it was adorned with goodly stones, and gifts." The Jews give very great encomiums of the second temple, as repaired by Herod; and it was undoubtedly a very fine structure. They say ^{f1345}, that he built the house of the sanctuary, "an exceeding beautiful building"; and that he repaired the temple, in beauty "greatly exceeding" that of Solomon's ^{f1346}. They moreover observe ^{f1347}, that

"he who has not seen the building of Herod, has never seen, **han ^yynb**, "a beautiful building." With what is it built? says Rabbah, with stones of green and white marble. And there are others say, that it was built with stones of spotted green and white marble."

These, very likely, were the very stones the disciples pointed to, and admired; and were of a prodigious size, as well as worth. Some of the stones were, as Josephus^{f1348} says,

“forty five cubits long, five high, and six broad.”

Others of them, as he elsewhere affirm^{f1349},

“were twenty five cubits long, eight high, and twelve broad.”

And he also tells us, in the same place, that there were,

“in the porches, four rows of pillars: the thickness of each pillar was as much as three men, with their arms stretched out, and joined together, could grasp; the length twenty seven feet, and the number of them an hundred and sixty two, and beautiful to a miracle.”

At the size of those stones, and the beauty of the work, it is said^{f1350}, Titus was astonished, when he destroyed the temple; at which time his soldiers plundered it, and took away “the gifts”, with which it is also said to be adorned. These were rich and valuable things which were dedicated to it, and either laid up in it, or hung upon the walls and pillars of it, as it was usual in other temples^{f1351}. These may, intend the golden table given by Pompey, and the spoils which Herod dedicated; and particularly the golden vine, which was a gift of his^{f1352}; besides multitudes of other valuable things, which were greatly enriching and ornamental to it. Now the disciples suggest, by observing these, what a pity it was such a grand edifice should be destroyed; or how unaccountable it was; that a place of so much strength, could easily be demolished.

Ver. 2. *And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things?* etc.] “These great buildings”, as in Mark; all these goodly stones, so beautiful and large, and so firmly put together:

verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down; or broken, as Munster’s Hebrew Gospel reads it: which prediction had a full and remarkable accomplishment; and which is not only attested by Josephus^{f1353}, who relates, that both the city and temple were dug up, and laid level with the ground; but also by other Jewish writers; who tell us^{f1354} that

“on the ninth of Ab, a day prepared for punishments, Turnus Rufus the wicked, *I kyhh ta çrj*, “ploughed up the temple”, and all

round about it, to fulfil what is said, “Zion shall be ploughed as a field”.”

Yes, and to fulfil what Christ here says too, that not one stone should be left upon another, which a plough would not admit of.

Ver. 3. *And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives*, etc.] Which was on the east of the city of Jerusalem ^{f1355}, “over against the temple”, as Mark says, and where he could sit and take a full view of it; for the wall on the east side was lower than any other, and that for this reason; that when the high priest burnt the red heifer on this mount, as he did, and sprinkled the blood, he might have a view of the gate of the temple. It is said ^{f1356},

“all the walls which were there, were very high, except the eastern wall; for the high priest, when he burned the heifer, stood on the top of the mount of Olives, and directed himself, and looked to the gate of the temple, at the time he sprinkled the blood.”

This place, very probably, our Lord chose to sit in, that he might give his disciples an occasion to discourse more largely with him on this subject; and that he might take the opportunity of acquainting them with what would be the signs and forerunners of this desolation, and so it proved:

the disciples came to him privately; these four at least, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, as Mark relates; and that either separately from the rest of the disciples, or from the multitude: it might not be thought so proper, to ask the following questions before them, and they might suppose that Christ would not be so ready to give an answer to them plainly, before the common people; when they might hope to be indulged with one by him, in private:

saying, tell us, when shall these things be? That this house will be left desolate, these buildings will be destroyed, and not one stone left upon another? This first question relates purely to the destruction of the temple, and to this Christ first answers, from (^{<420>}Matthew 24:4-23).

And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? Which two are put together, as what they supposed would be at the same time, and immediately follow the destruction of the temple. That he was come in the flesh, and was the true Messiah, they firmly believed: he was with them, and they expected he would continue with them, for they had no notion of his leaving them, and coming again. When he at any time

spake of his dying and rising from the dead, they seemed not to understand it: wherefore this coming of his, the sign of which, they inquire, is not to be understood of his coming a second time to judge the world, at the last day; but of his coming in his kingdom and glory, which they had observed him some little time before to speak of; declaring that some present should not die, till they saw it: wherefore they wanted to be informed, by what sign they might know, when he would set up his temporal kingdom; for since the temple was to be destroyed, they might hope a new one would be built, much more magnificent than this, and which is a Jewish notion; and that a new state of things would commence; the present world, or age, would be at a period; and the world to come, they had so often heard of from the Jewish doctors, would take place; and therefore they ask also, of the sign of the end of the world, or present state of things in the Jewish economy: to this Christ answers, in the latter part of this chapter, though not to the sense in which they put the questions; yet in the true sense of the coming of the son of man, and the end of the world; and in such a manner, as might be very instructive to them, and is to us.

Ver. 4. *And Jesus answered and said unto them,* etc.] Not to indulge their curiosity, but to instruct them in things useful to be known, and which might be cautions to them and others, against deceivers; confirm them in the faith of himself, when they should see his predictions accomplished; and be directions to them, of what might shortly be expected.

Take heed that no man deceive you: by pretending to come from God with a new revelation, setting himself up for the Messiah, after my departure; suggesting himself to be the person designed by God to be the deliverer of Israel, and to be sent by him, to set up a temporal kingdom, in great worldly splendour and glory; promising great names, and high places of honour and trust in it; things which Christ knew his disciples were fond of, and were in danger of being ensnared by; and therefore gives them this suitable and seasonable advice, and caution.

Ver. 5. *For many shall come in my name,* etc.] by his orders, or with delegated powers and authority from him; but should assume the name of the Messiah, which was peculiarly his, to themselves; and take upon them his office, and challenge the honour and dignity which belonged unto him:

saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. This is the first sign, preceding the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem; as there was a general expectation among the Jews of a Messiah; that is, of one that

should arise and deliver them from the Roman yoke, which was the common idea tacked to that word; in this period of time, many set up themselves to be deliverers and redeemers of the people of Israel: who had each of them their followers in great numbers, whom they imposed upon, and brought to destruction. Of this sort was Theudas, not he that Gamaliel speaks of, (⁴⁴¹³⁶Acts 5:36) for he was before this time; but one that was in the time of Claudius Caesar, when Cuspius Fadus was governor of Judea; who persuaded a great number to follow him to the river Jordan, which he promised to divide, by a word of command, and give them a passage over; and thereby, as the historian observes ^{f1357}, πολλοὺς ηπατησῆν, “he deceived many”; which is the very thing that is here predicted: but he and his company were routed Fadus, and his head cut off. There was another called the Egyptian, mentioned in (⁴⁴¹³⁸Acts 21:38) who made an uproar, and led four thousand cut-throats into the wilderness; and this same man persuaded thirty thousand men to follow him to Mount Olivet, promising a free passage into the city; but he being vanquished by Felix, then governor of Judea; fled, and many of his followers were killed and taken ^{f1358}: and besides, there were many more magicians and impostors, that pretended to signs and wonders, and promised the people deliverance from their evils, by whom they were imposed upon to their ruin. There were others also besides these, that set up for deliverers, who called themselves by the name of the Messiah. Among these, we may reckon Simon Magus, who gave out that he was some great one; yea, expressly, that he was the word of God, and the Son of God ^{f1359}, which were known names of the Messiah; and Dositheus the Samaritan, asserted himself to be Christ ^{f1360}; and also Menander affirmed, that no man could be saved, unless he was baptized in his name ^{f1361}; these are instances before the destruction of Jerusalem, and confirm the prophecy here delivered.

Ver. 6. *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars*, etc.] This is the second sign of the destruction of Jerusalem: it is observable that this, and some of the following signs, are given by the Jews, as signs of the Messiah’s coming; whereas they were forerunners of their ruin, for the rejection of him who was already come. They suppose the Messiah will come in the seventh year, or the year of rest and release:

“On the seventh year (they say ^{f1362}) will be **twmj l m**, “wars”: and in the going out, or at the close of the seventh year, the son of David will come.”

Which wars, the gloss says, will be between the nations of the world, and Israel. Here wars may mean the commotions, insurrections, and seditions, against the Romans, and their governors; and the intestine slaughters committed among them, some time before the siege of Jerusalem, and the destruction of it. Under Cureanus the Roman governor, a sedition was raised on the day of the passover, in which twenty thousand perished; after that, in another tumult, ten thousand were destroyed by cut-throats: in Ascalon two thousand more, in Ptolemais two thousand, at Alexandria fifty thousand, at Damascus ten thousand, and elsewhere in great numbers ^{f1363}. The Jews were also put into great consternation, upon hearing the design of the Roman emperor, to put up his image in their temple:

see that ye be not troubled; so as to leave the land of Judea as yet, and quit the preaching of the Gospel there, as if the final destruction was just at hand;

for all these things must come to pass; these wars and the reports of them and the panic on account of them; these commotions and slaughters, and terrible devastations by the sword must be; being determined by God, predicted by Christ, and brought upon the Jews by their own wickedness; and suffered in righteous judgment, for their sin:

but the end is not yet; meaning not the end of the world, but the end of Jerusalem, and the temple, the end of the Jewish state; which were to continue, and did continue after these disturbances in it.

Ver. 7. *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*, etc.] This seems to be a distinct and third sign, foreboding the general calamity of the Jews; that there should be not only seditions and intestine wars, in the midst of their country, but there should be wars in other nations, one with another; and with the Jews, and the Jews with them: and this also is made a sign of the Messiah's coming by them, for so they say ^{f1364};

“when thou seest, **wl ab wl a twrgtm twykl m**, “kingdoms stirred up one against another”, look for the feet of the Messiah: know thou that so it shall be; for so it was in the days of Abraham: by the means of kingdoms stirred up one against another, redemption came to Abraham.”

Poor blinded creatures! when these very things were the forerunners of their destruction. And so it was, the Jewish nation rose up against others, the Samaritans, Syrians, and Romans: there were great commotions in the Roman empire, between Otho and Vitellius, and Vitellius and Vespasian; and at length the Romans rose up against the Jews, under the latter, and entirely destroyed them; compare the writings in 2 Esdras:

“And one shall undertake to fight against another, one city against another, one place against another, one people against another, and one realm against another.” (2 Esdras 13:31)

“the beginning of sorrows and great mournings; the beginning of famine and great death; the beginning of wars, and the powers shall stand in fear; the beginning of evils! what shall I do when these evils shall come?” (2 Esdras 16:18)

“Therefore when there shall be seen earthquakes and uproars of the people in the world:” (2 Esdras 9:3)

And there shall be famines: a fourth sign of the desolation of the city and temple, and which the Jews also say, shall go before the coming of the Messiah:

“in the second year (of the week of years) in which the son of David comes, they say ^{f1365}, there will be “arrows of famine” sent forth; and in the third year, **l wdg b[r**, “a great famine”: and men, women, and children, and holy men, and men of business, shall die.”

But these have been already; they followed the Messiah, and preceded their destruction: one of these famines was in Claudius Caesar’s time, was foretold by Agabus, and is mentioned in (~~4113~~ Acts 11:28) and most dreadful ones there were, whilst Jerusalem was besieged, and before its utter ruin, related by Josephus.

And pestilences: a pestilence is described by the Jews after this manner ^{f1366}.

“a city that produces a thousand and five hundred footmen, as Cephar Aco, and nine dead men are carried out of it in three days, one after another, lo! **rbd hz**, “this is a pestilence”; but if in one day, or in four days, it is no pestilence; and a city that produces five

hundred footmen, as Cephar Amiko, and three dead men are carried out of it in three days, one after another, lo! this is a pestilence.”

These commonly attend famines, and are therefore mentioned together; and when the one was, the other may be supposed sooner or later to be:

and earthquakes in divers places of the world; as, at Crete^{f1367}, and in divers cities in Asia^{f1368}, in the times of Nero: particularly the three cities of Phrygia, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse; which were near to each other, and are all said to perish this way, in his reign^{f1369};

“and Rome itself felt a tremor, in the reign of Galba^{f1370}.”

Ver. 8. *All these are the beginning of sorrows*, etc.] They were only a prelude unto them, and forerunners of them; they were only some foretastes of what would be, and were far from being the worst that should be endured. These were but light, in comparison of what befell the Jews, in their dreadful destruction. The word here used, signifies the sorrows and pains of a woman in travail. The Jews expect great sorrows and distresses in the times of the Messiah, and use a word to express them by, which answers to this, and call them, *j yçmh yl bj*, “the sorrows of the Messiah”; *yl bj*, they say^{f1371}, signifies the sorrows of a woman in travail; and the Syriac version uses the same word here. These they represent to be very great, and express much concern to be delivered from them. They^{f1372} ask,

“what shall a man do, to be delivered from “the sorrows of the Messiah?” He must employ himself in the law, and in liberality.”

And again^{f1373},

“he that observes the three meals on the sabbath day, shall be delivered from three punishments; from “the sorrows of the Messiah”, from the judgment of hell, and from Gog and Magog.”

But alas there was no other way of escaping them, but by faith in the true Messiah, Jesus; and it was for their disbelief and rejection of him, that these came upon them.

Ver. 9. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted*, etc.] Our Lord proceeds to acquaint his disciples, what should befall them in this interval;

and quite contrary to their expectations, who were looking for a temporal kingdom, and worldly grandeur, assures them of afflictions, persecutions, and death; that about these times, when these various signs should appear, and this beginning of sorrows take place; whilst these will be fulfilling in Judea, and other parts of the world; the Jews continuing in their obstinacy and unbelief, would deliver them up to the civil magistrates, to be scourged and imprisoned by them; either to their own sanhedrim, as were Peter and John; or to the Roman governors, Gallio, Festus, and Felix, as was the Apostle Paul.

And shall kill you; as the two James', Peter, Paul, and even all the apostles, excepting John, who suffered martyrdom, and that before the destruction of Jerusalem:

and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake; as the apostles and first Christians were, both by Jews and Gentiles; the latter being stirred up against them by the former, wherever they came, and for no other reason, but because they professed and preached in the name of Christ, as the Acts of the Apostles show: and their hatred proceeded so far, as to charge all their calamities upon them; as war, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, etc. as the apologies of the first Christians declare.

Ver. 10. *And then shall many be offended*, etc.] That is, many who had been hearers of the apostles, and professors of the Christian religion; who were highly pleased with it, and were strenuous advocates for it, whilst things were tolerably quiet and easy; but when they saw the apostles, some of them beaten, and imprisoned; others put to death, and others forced to fly from place to place; and persecutions and affliction, because of Christ and his Gospel, likely to befall themselves, would be discouraged hereby, and stumble at the cross; and fall off from the faith of the Gospel, and the profession of it:

and shall betray one another; meaning, that the apostates, who would fall off from the Christian religion, would prove treacherous to true believers, and give in their names to the persecutors, or inform them where they were, that they might take them, or deliver them into their hands themselves: these are the false brethren, the Apostle Paul was in perils among:

and shall hate one another; not that the true Christians should hate these false brethren, any more than betray them; for they are taught to love all

men, even their enemies; but these apostates should hate them, in whose communion they before were, and to whom they belonged; and even to a very great degree of hatred, as it often is seen, that such who turn their backs on Christ, and his Gospel, prove the most bitter enemies, and most violent persecutors of its preachers and followers.

Ver. 11. *And many false prophets shall rise*, etc.] Out of, from among the churches of Christ; at least under the name of Christians; for false teachers are here meant, men of heretical principles, pretending to a spirit of prophecy, and to new revelations, and a better understanding of the Scriptures; such as Simon Magus, Ebion, and Cerinthus, who denied the proper deity, and real humanity of Christ; Carpocrates, and the Gnostics his followers, the Nicolaitans, Hymcneus, Philetus, and others:

and shall deceive many: as they all of them had their followers, and large numbers of them, whose faith was subverted by them; and who followed their pernicious ways, being imposed upon and seduced by their fair words, specious pretences, and licentious practices.

Ver. 12. *And because iniquity shall abound*, etc.] Meaning, either the malice and wickedness of outrageous persecutors, which should greatly increase; or the treachery and hatred of the apostates; or the errors and heresies of false teachers; or the wickedness that prevailed in the lives and conversations of some, that were called Christians: for each of these seem to be hinted at in the context, and may be all included, as making up the abounding iniquity here spoken of; the consequence of which would be,

the love of many shall wax cold. This would be the case of many, but not of all; for in the midst of this abounding iniquity, there were some, the ardour of whose love to Christ, to his Gospel, and to the saints, did not abate: but then there were many, whose zeal for Christ, through the violence of persecution, was greatly damped; and through the treachery of false brethren, were shy of the saints themselves, not knowing who to trust; and through the principles of the false teachers, the power of godliness, and the vital heat of religion, were almost lost; and through a love of the world, and of carnal ease and pleasure, love to the saints was grown very chill, and greatly left; as the instances of Demas, and those that forsook the Apostle Paul, at his first answer before Nero, show. This might be true of such, who were real believers in Christ; who might fall under great decays, through the prevalence of iniquity; since it does not say their love shall be lost, but wax cold.

Ver. 13. *But he that shall endure to the end*, etc.] In the profession of faith in Christ, notwithstanding the violent persecutions of wicked men; and in the pure and incorrupt doctrines of the Gospel, whilst many are deceived by the false teachers that shall arise; and in holiness of life and conversation, amidst all the impurities of the age; and shall patiently bear all afflictions, to the end of his life, or to the end of sorrows, of which the above mentioned were the beginning:

the same shall be saved; with a temporal salvation, when Jerusalem, and the unbelieving inhabitants of it shall be destroyed: for those that believed in Christ, many of them, through persecution, were obliged to remove from thence; and others, by a voice from heaven, were bid to go out of it, as they did; and removed to Pella, a village a little beyond Jordan^{f1374}, and so were preserved from the general calamity; and also with an everlasting salvation, which is the case of all that persevere to the end, as all true believers in Christ will.

Ver. 14. *And this Gospel of the kingdom*, etc.] Which Christ himself preached, and which he called and sent his apostles to preach, in all the cities of Judah; by which means men were brought into the kingdom of the Messiah, or Gospel dispensation; and which treated both of the kingdom of grace and glory, and pointed out the saints' meetness for the kingdom of heaven, and their right unto it, and gives the best account of the glories of it:

shall be preached in all the world; not only in Judea, where it was now confined, and that by the express orders of Christ himself; but in all the nations of the world, for which the apostles had their commission enlarged, after our Lord's resurrection; when they were bid to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; and when the Jews put away the Gospel from them, they accordingly turned to the Gentiles; and before the destruction of Jerusalem, it was preached to all the nations under the heavens; and churches were planted in most places, through the ministry of it:

for a witness unto all nations; meaning either for a witness against all such in them, as should reject it; or as a testimony of Christ and salvation, unto all such as should believe in him:

and then shall the end come; not the end of the world, as the Ethiopic version reads it, and others understand it; but the end of the Jewish state,

the end of the city and temple: so that the universal preaching of the Gospel all over the world, was the last criterion and sign, of the destruction of Jerusalem; and the account of that itself next follows, with the dismal circumstances which attended it.

Ver. 15. *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation*, etc.]

From signs, Christ proceeds to the immediate cause of the destruction of Jerusalem; which was, “the abomination of desolation”, or the desolating abomination; or that abominable thing, which threatened and brought desolation upon the city, temple, and nation: by which is meant, not any statue placed in the temple by the Romans, or their order; not the golden eagle which Herod set upon the temple gate, for that was before Christ said these words; nor the image of Tiberius Caesar, which Pilate is said to bring into the temple; for this, if true, must be about this time; whereas Christ cannot be thought to refer to anything so near at hand; much less the statue of Adrian, set in the most holy place, which was an hundred and thirty years and upwards, after the destruction of the city and temple; nor the statue of Titus, who destroyed both, which does not appear: ever to be set up, or attempted; nor of Caligula, which, though ordered, was prevented being placed there: but the Roman army is designed; (see ^{<221>}Luke 21:20) which was the $\mu\mu\varsigma\mu \mu\chi\omega\upsilon\varsigma$ Pnk, “the wing”, or “army of abominations making desolate”, (^{<202>}Daniel 9:27). Armies are called wings, (^{<218>}Isaiah 8:8) and the Roman armies were desolating ones to the Jews, and to whom they were an abomination; not only because they consisted of Heathen men, and uncircumcised persons, but chiefly because of the images of their gods, which were upon their ensigns: for images and idols were always an abomination to them; so the “filthiness” which Hezekiah ordered to be carried out of the holy place, (^{<495>}2 Chronicles 29:5) is by the Targum called, $aqwj yr$, “an abomination”; and this, by the Jewish writers ^{f1375}, is said to be an idol, which Ahaz had placed upon the altar; and such was the abomination of desolation, which Antiochus caused to be set upon the altar:

“Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;” (1 Maccabees 1:54)

And so the Talmudic writers, by the abomination that makes desolate, in (^{<212>}Daniel 12:11 9:27) to which Christ here refers, understand an image,

which they say ^{f1376} one Apotomus, a Grecian general, who burnt their law, set up in the temple. Now our Lord observes, that when they should see the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem, with their ensigns flying, and these abominations on them, they might conclude its desolation was near at hand; and he does not so much mean his apostles, who would be most of them dead, or in other countries, when this would come to pass; but any of his disciples and followers, or any persons whatever, by whom should be seen this desolating abomination,

spoken of by Daniel the prophet: not in (^{<2713>}Daniel 11:31) which is spoken of the abomination in the times of Antiochus; but either in (^{<2711>}Daniel 12:11) or rather in (^{<2707>}Daniel 9:27) since this desolating abomination is that, which should follow the cutting off of the Messiah, and the ceasing of the daily sacrifice. It is to be observed, that Daniel is here called a prophet, contrary to what the Jewish writers say ^{f1377}, who deny him to be one; though one of ^{f1378} no inconsiderable note among them affirms, that he attained to the end, *yyawbnh l wbg*, “of the prophetic border”, or the ultimate degree of prophecy: when therefore this that Daniel, under a spirit of prophecy, spoke of should be seen,

standing in the holy place; near the walls, and round about the holy city Jerusalem, so called from the sanctuary and worship of God in it; and which, in process of time, stood in the midst of it, and in the holy temple, and destroyed both; then

whoso readeth, let him understand: that is, whoever then reads the prophecy of Daniel; will easily understand the meaning of it, and will see and know for certain, that now it is accomplished; and will consider how to escape the desolating judgment, unless he is given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart; which was the case of the greater part of the nation.

Ver. 16. *Then let them which be in Judea,* etc.] When this signal is given, let it be taken notice of and observed; let them that are in the city of Jerusalem, depart out of it; or who are in any other parts of Judea, in any of the towns, or cities thereof; let them not betake themselves to Jerusalem, imagining they may be safe there, in so strong and fortified a place, but let them flee elsewhere; (see ^{<2721>}Luke 21:21) and accordingly it is observed, that many did flee about this time; and it is remarked by several interpreters, and which Josephus ^{f1379} takes notice of with surprise, that Cestius Gallus having advanced with his army to Jerusalem, and besieged

it, on a sudden, without any cause, raised the siege, and withdrew his army, when the city might have been easily taken; by which means a signal was made; and an opportunity given to the Christians, to make their escape: which they accordingly did, and went over Jordan, as Eusebius says ^{f1380}, to a place called Pella; so that when Titus came a few mouths after, there was not a Christian in the city, but they had fled as they are here bidden to

flee into the mountains; or any places of shelter and refuge: these are mentioned particularly, because they are usually such; and design either the mountains in Judea, or in the adjacent countries. The Syriac and Persic versions read in the singular number, “into the mountain”; and it is reported that many of them did fly, particularly to Mount Libanus ^{f1381}.

Ver. 17. *Let him which is on the housetop*, etc.] Who should be there either for his devotion or recreation; for the houses of the Jews were built with flat roofs and battlements about them, which they made use of both for diversion and pleasure, and for private meditation and prayer, for social conversation, and sometimes for public preaching; (see ~~<400>~~ Matthew 10:27, ~~<400>~~ Acts 10:9)

not come down to take anything out of his house: that is, let him not come down in the inner way, but by the stairs, or ladder, on the outside of the house, which was usual. They had two ways of going out of, and into their houses; the one they call ^{f1382}, *μϋϵ ϵϵϵϵ*, “the way of the doors”; the other, *ϵϵϵϵ ϵϵϵϵ*, “the way of the roof”: upon which the gloss is,

“to go up on the outside, *μϋ ϵϵ ϵϵϵϵ*, “by way” or “means” of a ladder, fixed at the entrance of the door of the upper room, and from thence he goes down into the house by a ladder;”

and in the same way they could come out; (see ~~<400>~~ Mark 2:4) and let him not go into his house to take any of his goods, or money, or food along with him necessary for his sustenance in his flight; lest, whilst he is busy in taking care of these, he loses his life, or, at least, the opportunity of making his escape; so sudden is this desolation represented to be.

Ver. 18. *Neither let him which is in the field*, etc.] Ploughing, or sowing, or employed in any other parts of husbandry, or rural business,

return back to take clothes; for it was usual to work in the fields without their clothes, as at ploughing and sowing. Hence those words of Virgil ^{f1383}.

“Nudus ara, sere nudus, hyems ignava colono.”

Upon which Servius observes, that in good weather, when the sun warms the earth, men might plough and sow without their clothes: and it is reported by the historian^{f1384} of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, that the messengers who were sent to him, from Minutius the consul, whom he had delivered from a siege, found him ploughing naked beyond the Tiber: not that he was entirely naked, but was stripped of his upper garments: and it is usual for people that work in the fields to strip themselves to their shirts, and lay their clothes at the corner of the field, or at the land's end; and which we must suppose to be the case here: for our Lord's meaning is not, that the man working in the field, should not return home to fetch his clothes, which were not left there; they were brought with him into the field, but put off; and laid aside in some part of it while at work; but that as soon as he had the news of Jerusalem being besieged, he should immediately make the best of his way, and flee to the mountains, as Lot was bid to do at the burning of Sodom; and he might not return to the corner of the field, or land's end, where his clothes lay, as Lot was not to look behind; though if his clothes lay in the way of his flight, he might take them up, but might not go back for them, so sudden and swift should be the desolation. The Vulgate Latin reads, in the singular number, “his coat”; and so do the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and so it was read in four copies of Beza's, in three of Stephens's, and in others; and may design the upper coat or garment, which was put off whilst at work.

Ver. 19. *And woe unto them that are with child,* etc.] Not that it should be criminal for them to be with child, or a judgment on them; for it was always esteemed a blessing to be fruitful, and bear children: but this expresses the miserable circumstances such would be in, who, by reason of their heavy burdens, would not be able to make so speedy a flight, as the case would require; or would be obliged to stay at home, and endure all the miseries of the siege: so that these words, as the following are not expressive of sin, or punishment, but of pity and concern for their misery and distress:

and to them that give suck in those days; whose tender affection to their infants will not suffer them to leave them behind them; and yet such their weakness, that they will not be able to carry them with them; at least, they must be great hindrances to their speedy flight. So that the case of these is

much worse than that of men on the house top, or in the field, who could much more easily leave their goods and clothes, than these their children, as well as had more agility and strength of body to flee. So *twqynymw twrbw* [“women with child, and that give suck”]; are mentioned together in the Jewish writings, as such as were excused from certain fasts, though obliged to others^{f1385}.

Ver. 20. *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter*, etc.] When days are short, and unfit for long journeys, and roads are bad, and sometimes not passable, through large snows, or floods of water; and when to dwell in desert places, and lodge in mountains, must be very uncomfortable: wherefore Christ directs to pray to God, who has the disposal of all events, and of the timing of them, that he would so order things in the course of his providence, that their flight might not be in such a season of the year, when travelling would be very difficult and troublesome. Dr. Lightfoot observes, from a Jewish writer^{f1386}, that it is remarked as a favour of God in the destruction of the first temple, that it happened in the summer, and not in winter; whose words are these:

“God vouchsafed a great favour to Israel, for they ought to have gone out of the land on the tenth day of the month Tebeth; as he saith (^{צבד}Ezekiel 24:2) “son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day”: what then did the Lord, holy and blessed? If they shall now go out in the winter, (saith he,) they will all die; therefore he prolonged the time to them, and carried them away in summer.”

And since therefore they received such a favour from him at the destruction of the first temple, there was encouragement to pray to him, that they might be indulged with the like favour when Jerusalem should be besieged again:

neither on the sabbath day: the word “day” is not in the Greek text; and some^{f1387} have been of opinion, that the “sabbatical year”, or the seventh year, is meant, when no fruits would be found in the fields, and a great scarcity of provisions among people; who would not have a sufficiency, and much less any to spare to strangers fleeing from their native places; but rather the sabbath day, or “day of the sabbath”, as the Persic version reads it, is designed; and Beza says, four of his copies read it in the genitive case: and so four of Stephens’s. And the reason why our Lord put them on

praying, that their flight might not be on the sabbath day, was, because he knew not only that the Jews, who believed not in him, would not suffer them to travel on a sabbath day more than two thousand cubits; which, according to their traditions ^{f1388}, was a sabbath day's journey; and which would not be sufficient for their flight to put them out of danger; but also, that those that did believe in him, particularly the Jerusalem Jews, would be all of them fond of the law of Moses, and scrupulous of violating any part of it, and especially that of the sabbath; (see ~~<421>~~ Acts 21:20). And though the Jews did allow, that the sabbath might be violated where life was in danger, and that it was lawful to defend themselves against an enemy on the sabbath day; yet this did not universally obtain; and it was made a question of, after the time of Christ, whether it was lawful to flee from danger on the sabbath day; of which take the following account ^{f1389}.

“Our Rabbins teach, that he that is pursued by Gentiles, or by thieves, may profane the sabbath for the sake of saving his life: and so we find of David, when Saul sought to slay him, he fled from him, and escaped. Our Rabbins say, that it happened that evil writings (or edicts) came from the government to the great men of Tzippore; and they went, and said to R. Eleazar ben Prata, evil edicts are come to us from the government, what dost thou say? **j rbn**, “shall we flee?” and he was afraid to say to them “flee”; but he said to them with a nod, why do you ask me? go and ask Jacob, and Moses, and David; as it is written, of Jacob, (~~<382>~~ Hosea 12:12) “and Jacob fled”; and so of Moses, (~~<0125>~~ Exodus 2:15) “and Moses fled”; and so of David, (~~<0998>~~ 1 Samuel 19:18) “and David fled, and escaped”: and he (God) says, (~~<2330>~~ Isaiah 26:20) “come my people, enter into thy chambers”.”

From whence, it is plain, it was a question with the doctors in Tzippore, which was a town in Galilee, where there was an university, whether it was lawful to flee on the sabbath day or not; and though the Rabbi they applied to was of opinion it was lawful, yet he was fearful of speaking out his sense plainly, and therefore delivered it by signs and hints. Now our Lord's meaning, in putting them on this petition, was, not to prevent the violation of the seventh day sabbath, or on account of the sacredness of it, which he knew would be abolished, and was abolished before this time; but he says this with respect to the opinion of the Jews, and “Judaizing” Christians, who, taking that day to be sacred, and fleeing on it unlawful, would find a difficulty with themselves, and others, to make their escape; otherwise it

was as lawful to flee and travel on that day, as in the winter season; though both, for different reasons, incommodious.

Ver. 21. *For then shall be great tribulation*, etc.] This is urged as a reason for their speedy flight; since the calamity that would come upon those who should remain in the city, what through the sword, famine, pestilence, murders, robberies, etc. would

be such as was not since the beginning of the world, to this time, no, nor ever shall be. The burning of Sodom and Gomorrha, the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, their captivity in Babylon, and all their distresses and afflictions in the times of the Maccabees, are nothing to be compared with the calamities which befell the Jews in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Great desolations have been made in the besieging and at the taking of many famous cities, as Troy, Babylon, Carthage, etc. but none of them are to be mentioned with the deplorable case of this city. Whoever reads Josephus's account will be fully convinced of this; and readily join with him, who was an eyewitness of it, when he says^{f1390}, that

“never did any city suffer such things, nor was there ever any generation that more abounded in malice or wickedness.”

And indeed, all this came upon them for their impenitence and infidelity, and for their rejection and murdering of the Son of God; for as never any before, or since, committed the sin they did, or ever will, so there never did, or will, the same calamity befall a nation, as did them.

Ver. 22. *And except those days should be shortened*, etc.] That is, those days of tribulation which commenced at the siege of Jerusalem; and therefore cannot refer to the times before it, and the shortening of them by it, which were very dreadful and deplorable through the murders and robberies of the cut-throats and zealots; but to those after the siege began, which were very distressing to those that were within; and which, if they had not been shortened, or if the siege had been lengthened out further,

there should no flesh be saved; not one Jew in the city of Jerusalem would have been saved; they must everyone have perished by famine, or pestilence, or sword, or by the intestine wars and murders among themselves: nor indeed, if the siege had continued, would it have fared better with the inhabitants of the other parts of the country, among whom also many of the same calamities prevailed and spread themselves; so that,

in all likelihood, if these days had been continued a little longer, there had not been a Jew left in all the land.

But for the elect's sake; those who were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to believe in him, and to be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; both those that were in the city, or, at least, who were to spring from some that were there, as their immediate offspring, or in future ages, and therefore they, and their posterity, must not be cut off; and also those chosen ones, and real believers, who were at Pella, and in the mountains, and other places, for the sake of these, and that they might be delivered from these pressing calamities,

those days shall be shortened: for otherwise, if God had not preserved a seed, a remnant, according to the election of grace, that should be saved, they had been as Sodom and as Gomorrha, not one would have escaped. The shortening of those days is not to be understood literally, as if the natural days, in which this tribulation was, were to be shorter than usual. The Jews indeed often speak of the shortening of days in this sense, as miraculously done by God: so they say^{f1391}, that

“five miracles were wrought for our father Jacob, when he went from Beersheba to go to Haran. The first miracle was, that **amwyd yw[ç hyl wrxqta**, “the hours of the day were shortened for him”, and the sun set before its time, because his word desired to speak with him.”

They also say^{f1392},

“that the day in which Ahaz died, was shortened ten hours, that they might not mourn for him; and which afterwards rose up, and in the day that Hezekiah was healed, ten hours were added to it.”

But the meaning here is, that the siege of Jerusalem, and the calamities attending it, should be sooner ended: not than God had determined, but than the sin of the Jews deserved, and the justice of God might have required in strict severity, and might be reasonably expected, considering the aggravated circumstances of their iniquities. A like manner of speech is used by the Karaite Jews^{f1393}, who say,

“if we walk in our law, why is our captivity prolonged, and there is not found balm for our wounds? and why are not **µhymy wj [mtn**,

“the days” of the golden and silver kingdom “lessened”, for the righteousness of the righteous, which were in their days?”

Ver. 23. *Then if any man shall say unto you*, etc.] Either at the time when the siege shall be begun, and the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place; or during the days of tribulation, whilst the siege lasted; or after those days were shortened, and the city destroyed, and the Roman army was gone with their captives: when some, that were scattered up and down in the country, would insinuate to their countrymen, that the Messiah was in such a place: saying,

lo! here is Christ, or there, believe it not; for both during the time of the siege, there were such that sprung up, and pretended to be Messiahs, and deliverers of them from the Roman power, and had their several abettors; one saying he was in such place, and another that he was in such a place; and so spirited up the people not to fly, nor to deliver up the city; and also, after the city was taken and destroyed, one and another set up for the Messiah. Very quickly after, one Jonathan, a very wicked man, led many into the desert of Cyrene, promising to show them signs and wonders, and was overthrown by Catullius, the Roman governor ^{f1394}; and after that, in the times of Adrian, the famous Barcochab set up for the Messiah, and was encouraged by R. Akiba, and a multitude of Jews ^{f1395}.

Ver. 24. *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets*, etc.] Such as the above mentioned: these false Christs had their false prophets, who endeavoured to persuade the people to believe them to be the Messiah, as Barcochab had Akiba, who applied many prophecies to him. This man was called Barcochab, which signifies the son of a star, in allusion to (^{<0247>}Numbers 24:17) he was crowned by the Jews, and proclaimed the Messiah by Akiba; upon which a Roman army was sent against him, and a place called Bitter was besieged, and taken, and he, and a prodigious number of Jews were destroyed. This deceiver was afterwards, by them, called Barcoziba, the son of a lie:

and shall show great signs and wonders; make an appearance of doing them, though they really did them not: so that Jonathan, before mentioned, pretended to show signs and sights; and Barcochab made as if flame came out of his mouth; and many of the Jewish doctors in these times, and following, gave themselves up to sorcery, and the magic art; and are, many

of them, often said ^{f1396} to be *μυσνβ μυδμwl m*, “expert in wonders”, or miracles:

if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. By whom we are to understand, not the choicest believers, or the persevering Christians: not but that such who are truly converted, are choice believers in Christ, and persevering Christians are undoubtedly the elect of God; but then the reason why they are elect, and why they are so called, is not because they are converted, are choice believers, and persevering Christians; but, on the contrary, the reason why they are converted, become true believers, and persevere to the end, is, because they are elected; conversion, faith, and perseverance being not the causes or conditions, but the fruits and effects of election: besides to talk of the final seduction of a persevering Christian, is a contradiction in terms. Such an interpretation of the phrase must be absurd and impertinent; for who knows not that a persevering Christian cannot be finally and totally deceived? But by the elect are meant, a select number of particular persons of Adam’s posterity, whom God, of his sovereign goodwill and pleasure, without respect to their faith, holiness, and good works, has chosen, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, both to grace and glory: and to deceive these finally and totally, is impossible, as is here suggested; not impossible, considering their own weakness, and the craftiness of deceivers, who, if left to themselves, and the power of such deception, and the working of Satan with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, might easily be seduced; but considering the purposes and promises of God concerning them, the provisions of his grace for them, the security of them in the hands of Christ, and their preservation by the mighty power of God, their final and total deception is not only difficult, but impossible. They may be, and are deceived before conversion; this is one part of their character whilst unregenerate, “foolish, disobedient, deceived”, (~~scrib~~ Titus 3:3) yea, they may be, and oftentimes are, deceived after conversion; but then this is in part only, and not totally; in some lesser, and not in the greater matters of faith; not so as to let go their hold of Christ their head, and quit the doctrine of salvation by him, or fall into damnable heresies: they may be seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel, but not finally; for they shall be recovered out of the snare of the devil, and not to be left to perish in such deceivings. This clause, as it expresses the power of deceivers, and the efficacy of Satan, so the influence and certainty of electing grace and the sure and firm perseverance of the saints, to the end, notwithstanding the

cunning and craft of men and devils; for if these, with all their signs and wonders, could not deceive them, it may be pronounced impossible that they ever should be finally and totally deceived.

Ver. 25. *Behold, I have told you before.*] Meaning not before in this discourse, though he had in (^{f1395}Matthew 24:5,11) signified also, that false Christs, and false prophets should arise, but before these things came to pass; so that they had sufficient notice and warning of them, and would be inexcusable if they were not upon their guard against them; and which, when they came to pass, would furnish out a considerable argument in proof of him, as the true Messiah, against all these false ones, showing him to be omniscient; and so would serve to establish their faith in him, and be a means of securing them from such deceivers.

Ver. 26. *Wherefore if they shall say unto you,* etc.] Any of the false prophets, or the deluded followers of false Christs:

behold, he is in the desert, go not forth: that is, should they affirm, that the Messiah is in such a wilderness, in the wilderness of Judea, or in any other desert place, do not go out of the places where you are to see, or hear, and know the truth of things; lest you should, in any respect, be stumbled, ensnared, and brought into danger. It was usual for these impostors to lead their followers into deserts, pretending to work wonders in such solitary places: so, during the siege, Simon, the son of Giora, collected together many thousands in the mountainous and desert parts of Judea ^{f1397}; and the above mentioned Jonathan, after the destruction of the city, led great multitudes into the desert:

behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not; or should others say behold, or for certain, the Messiah is in some one of the secret and fortified places of the temple; where, during some time of the siege, were John and Eleazar, the heads of the zealots ^{f1398}; do not believe them. Some reference may be had to the chamber of secrets, which was in the temple ^{f1399};

“for in the sanctuary there were two chambers; one was called **myačj tkçl**, “the chamber of secrets”, and the other the chamber of vessels.”

Or else some respect may be had to the notions of the Jews, concerning the Messiah, which they imbibed about these times, and ever since retained, that he was born the day Jerusalem was destroyed, but is hid, for their sins,

in some secret place, and will in time be revealed ^{f1400}. Some say, that he is hid in the sea; others, in the walks of the garden of Eden; and others, that he sits among the lepers at the gates of Rome ^{f1401}. The Syriac version here reads in the singular number, “in the bedchamber”; in some private apartment, where he remains till a proper time of showing himself offers, for fear of the Romans: but these are all idle notions, and none of them to be believed. The true Messiah is come, and has showed himself to Israel; and even the giving out these things discovers a consciousness, and a conviction that the Messiah is come.

Ver. 27. *For as the lightning cometh out of the east*, etc.] The eastern part of the horizon,

and shineth even unto the west; to the western part of it, with great clearness; in a moment; in the twinkling of an eye, filling the whole intermediate space;

so shall also the coming of the son of man be; which must be understood not of his last coming to judgment, though that will be sudden, visible, and universal; he will at once come to, and be seen by all, in the clouds of heaven, and not in deserts and secret chambers: nor of his spiritual coming in the more sudden, and clear, and powerful preaching of the Gospel all over the Gentile world; for this was to be done before the destruction of Jerusalem: but of his coming in his wrath and vengeance to destroy that people, their nation, city, and temple: so that after this to look for the Messiah in a desert, or secret chamber, must argue great stupidity and blindness; when his coming was as sudden, visible, powerful, and general, to the destruction of that nation, as the lightning that comes from the east, and, in a moment, shines to the west.

Ver. 28. *For wheresoever the carcass is*, etc.] Not Christ, as he is held forth in the Gospel, crucified and slain, through whose death is the savour of life, and by whom salvation is, and to whom sensible sinners flock, encouraged by the ministry of the word; and much less Christ considered as risen, exalted, and coming in great glory to judgment, to whom the word “carcass” will by no means agree, and but very poorly under the former consideration: but the people of the Jews are designed by it, in their fallen, deplorable, miserable, and lifeless state, who were like to the body of a man, or any other creature, struck dead with lightning from heaven; being destroyed by the breath of the mouth, and brightness of the coming of the son of man, like lightning, just as antichrist will be at the last day:

there will the eagles be gathered together: not particular believers here, or all the saints at the day of judgment; though these may be, as they are, compared to eagles for many things; as their swiftness in flying to Christ, their sagacity and the sharpness of their spiritual sight, soaring on high, and renewing their spiritual strength and youth: but here the Roman armies are intended, whose ensigns were eagles; and the eagle still is, to this day, the ensign of the Roman empire: formerly other creatures, with the eagle, were used for ensigns; but C. Marius, in his second consulship, banished them, and appropriated the eagle only to the legions: nor was it a single eagle that was carried before the army, but every legion had an eagle went before it, made of gold or silver, and carried upon the top of a spear^{f1402}: and the sense of this passage is this, that wherever the Jews were, whether at Jerusalem, where the body and carcass of them was, in a most forlorn and desperate condition; or in any other parts of the country, the Roman eagles, or legions, would find them out, and make an utter destruction of them. The Persic version, contrary to others, and to all copies, renders it “vultures”. Though this creature is of the same nature with the eagle, with respect to feeding on carcasses: hence the proverb,

“cujus vulturis hoc erit cadaver?”

“what vulture shall have this carcass?” It has a very sharp sight, and quick smell, and will, by both, discern carcasses at almost incredible distance: it will diligently watch a man that is near death; and will follow armies going to battle, as historians relate^{f1403}: and it is the eagle which is of the vulture kind, as Aristotle^{f1404} observes, that takes up dead bodies, and carries them to its nest. And Pliny^{f1405} says, it is that sort of eagles only which does so; and some have affirmed that eagles will by no means touch dead carcasses: but this is contrary not only to this passage of Scripture, but to others; particularly to (~~3830~~) Job 39:30 “her young ones also suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is she”: an expression much the same with this in the text, and to which it seems to refer; see also (~~2807~~) Proverbs 30:17). Though Chrysostom^{f1406} says, both the passage in Job, and this in Matthew, are to be understood of vultures; he doubtless means the eagles that are of the vulture kind, the Gypaetos, or vulture eagle. There is one kind of eagles, naturalists say^{f1407}, will not feed on flesh, which is called the bird of Jupiter; but, in common, the eagle is represented as a very rapacious creature, seizing, and feeding upon the flesh of hares, fawns, geese, etc. and the rather this creature is designed here; since, of all birds, this is the only one that is not hurt with lightning^{f1408}, and so can

immediately seize carcasses killed thereby; to which there seems to be an allusion here, by comparing it with the preceding verse: however, the Persic version, though it is literally a proper one, yet from the several things observed, it is not to be overlooked and slighted.

Ver. 29. *Immediately after the tribulation of those days*, etc.] That is, immediately after the distress the Jews would be in through the siege of Jerusalem, and the calamities attending it; just upon the destruction of that city, and the temple in it, with the whole nation of the Jews, shall the following things come to pass; and therefore cannot be referred to the last judgment, or what should befall the church, or world, a little before that time, or should be accomplished in the whole intermediate time, between the destruction of Jerusalem, and the last judgment: for all that is said to account for such a sense, as that it was usual with the prophets to speak of judgments afar off as near; and that the apostles often speak of the coming of Christ, the last judgment, and the end of the world, as just at hand; and that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, will not answer to the word “immediately”, or show that that should be understood of two thousand years after: besides, all the following things were to be fulfilled before that present generation, in which Christ lived, passed away, (⁴⁰⁶Matthew 24:34) and therefore must be understood of things that should directly, and immediately take place upon, or at the destruction of the city and temple.

Shall the sun be darkened: not in a literal but in a figurative sense; and is to be understood not of the religion of the Jewish church; nor of the knowledge of the law among them, and the decrease of it; nor of the Gospel being obscured by heretics and false teachers; nor of the temple of Jerusalem, senses which are given into by one or another; but of the Shekinah, or the divine presence in the temple. The glory of God, who is a sun and a shield, filled the tabernacle, when it was reared up; and so it did the temple, when it was built and dedicated; in the most holy place, Jehovah took up his residence; here was the symbol of his presence, the mercy seat, and the two cherubim over it: and though God had for some time departed from this people, and a voice was heard in the temple before its destruction, saying, “let us go hence”; yet the token of the divine presence remained till the utter destruction of it; and then this sun was wholly darkened, and there was not so much as the outward symbol of it:

and the moon shall not give her light; which also is to be explained in a figurative and metaphorical sense; and refers not to the Roman empire, which quickly began to diminish; nor to the city of Jerusalem; nor to the civil polity of the nation; but to the ceremonial law, the moon, the church is said to have under her feet, (^{661B}Revelation 12:1) so called because the observance of new moons was one part of it, and the Jewish festivals were regulated by the moon; and especially, because like the moon, it was variable and changeable. Now, though this, in right, was abolished at the death of Christ, and ceased to give any true light, when he, the substance, was come; yet was kept up by the Jews, as long as their temple was standing; but when that was destroyed, the daily sacrifice, in fact, ceased, and so it has ever since; the Jews esteeming it unlawful to offer sacrifice in a strange land, or upon any other altar than that of Jerusalem; and are to this day without a sacrifice, and without an ephod:

and the stars shall fall from heaven; which phrase, as it elsewhere intends the doctors of the church, and preachers falling off from purity of doctrine and conversation; so here it designs the Jewish Rabbins and doctors, who departed from the word of God, and set up their traditions above it, fell into vain and senseless interpretations of it, and into debates about things contained in their Talmud; the foundation of which began to be laid immediately upon their dispersion into other countries:

and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; meaning all the ordinances of the legal dispensation; which shaking, and even removing of them, were foretold by (^{300B}Haggai 2:6) and explained by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (^{812B}Hebrews 12:26,27) whereby room and way were made for Gospel ordinances to take place, and be established; which shall not be shaken, so as to be removed, but remain till the second coming of Christ. The Jews themselves are sensible, and make heavy complaints of the great declensions and alterations among them, since the destruction of the temple; for after having taken notice of the death of several of their doctors, who died a little before, or after that; and that upon their death ceased the honour of the law, the splendour of wisdom, and the glory of the priesthood, they add ^{f1409};

“from the time that the temple was destroyed, the wise men, and sons of nobles, were put to shame, and they covered their heads; liberal men were reduced to poverty; and men of violence and calumny prevailed; and there were none that expounded, or

inquired, or asked. R. Elezer the great, said, from the time the sanctuary were destroyed, the wise men began to be like Scribes, and the Scribes like to the Chazans, (or sextons that looked after the synagogues,) and the Chazans like to the common people, and the common people grew worse and worse, and there were none that inquired and asked;”

that is, of the wise men there were no scholars, or very few that studied in the law.

Ver. 30. *And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven,* etc.] Not the sound of the great trumpet, mentioned in the following verse; nor the clouds of heaven in this; nor the sign of the cross appearing in the air, as it is said to do in the times of Constantine: not the former; for though to blow a trumpet is sometimes to give a sign, and is an alarm; and the feast which the Jews call the day of blowing the trumpets, (^{<4020>}Numbers 29:1) is, by the Septuagint, rendered **ημερα σημασιας**, “the day of signification”; yet this sign is not said to be sounded, but to appear, or to be seen, which does not agree with the sounding of a trumpet: much less can this design the last trumpet at the day of judgment, since of that the text does not speak; and, for the same reason, the clouds cannot be meant in which Christ will come to judgment, nor are clouds in themselves any sign of it: nor the latter, of which there is no hint in the word of God, nor any reason to expect it, nor any foundation for it; nor is any miraculous star intended, such as appeared at Christ’s first coming, but the son of man himself: just as circumcision is called the sign of circumcision, (^{<4041>}Romans 4:11) and Christ is sometimes called a sign, (^{<4034>}Luke 2:34) as is his resurrection from the dead, (^{<4029>}Matthew 12:39) and here the glory and majesty in which he shall come: and it may be observed, that the other evangelists make no mention of the sign, only speak of the son of man, (^{<4136>}Mark 13:26, ^{<4027>}Luke 21:27) and he shall appear, not in person, but in the power of his wrath and vengeance, on the Jewish nation which will be a full sign and proof of his being come: for the sense is, that when the above calamities shall be upon the civil state of that people, and there will be such changes in their ecclesiastical state it will be as clear a point, that Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is also come in his vengeance on that nation, for their rejection and crucifixion him, as if they had seen him appear in person in the heavens. They had been always seeking a sign, and were continually asking one of him; and now they will have a sign with a witness; as they had accordingly.

And then shall the tribes of the earth, or land, *mourn*; that is, the land of Judea; for other lands, and countries, were not usually divided into tribes, as that was; neither were they affected with the calamities and desolations of it, and the vengeance of the son of man upon it; at least not so as to mourn on that account, but rather were glad and rejoiced:

and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. The Arabic version reads it, “ye shall see”, as is expressed by Christ, in (⁴⁰⁶⁴Matthew 26:64). Where the high priest, chief priests, Scribes, and elders, and the whole sanhedrim of the Jews are spoken to: and as the same persons, namely, the Jews, are meant here as there; so the same coming of the son of man is intended; not his coming at the last day to judgment; though that will be in the clouds of heaven, and with great power and glory; but his coming to bring on, and give the finishing stroke to the destruction of that people, which was a dark and cloudy dispensation to them: and when they felt the power of his arm, might, if not blind and stupid to the last degree, see the glory of his person, that he was more than a mere man, and no other than the Son of God, whom they had despised, rejected, and crucified; and who came to set up his kingdom and glory in a more visible and peculiar manner, among the Gentiles.

Ver. 31. *And he shall send his angels*, etc.] Not the angels, i.e. ministering spirits, so called, not from their nature, but their office, as being sent forth by God and Christ; but men angels, or messengers, the ministers and preachers of the Gospel, whom Christ would call, qualify, and send forth into all the world of the Gentiles, to preach his Gospel, and plant churches there still more, when that at Jerusalem was broken up and dissolved. These are called “angels”, because of their mission, and commission from Christ, to preach the Gospel; and because of their knowledge and understanding in spiritual things; and because of their zeal, diligence, and watchfulness.

With a great sound of a trumpet, meaning the Gospel; (see ²³⁷³Isaiah 27:13) so called in allusion either to the silver trumpets which Moses was ordered to make of one piece, and use them for the calling of the assembly, the journeying of the camps, blowing an alarm for war, and on their solemn and festival days, (⁴⁰⁰⁰Numbers 10:1-10). The Gospel being rich and precious, all of a piece, useful for gathering souls to Christ, and to his churches; to direct saints in their journey to Canaan’s land; to encourage

them to fight the Lord's battles; and is a joyful sound, being a sound of love, grace, and mercy, peace, pardon, righteousness, life and salvation, by Christ: or else so called, in allusion to the trumpet blown in the year of "jubilee"; which proclaimed rest to the land, liberty to prisoners, a release of debts, and restoration of inheritances; as the Gospel publishes rest in Christ, liberty to the captives of sin, Satan, and the law, a payment of debts by Christ, and a release from them upon that, and a right and title to the heavenly inheritance. The Vulgate Latin reads it, "with a trumpet, and a great voice"; and so does Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and so it was read in four of Beza's copies:

and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; that is, by the ministration of the Gospel; the Spirit of God accompanying it with his power, and grace, the ministers of the word should gather out of the world unto Christ, and to his churches, such persons as God had, before the foundation of the world, chosen in Christ, unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; wherever they are under the whole heavens, from one end to another; or in any part of the earth, though at the greatest distance; for in (⁴¹³⁷Mark 13:27) it is said, "from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of the heaven". The Jews ^{f1410} say, that

"in the after redemption (i.e. by the Messiah) all Israel shall be gathered together by the sound of a trumpet, from the four parts of the world."

Ver. 32. *Now learn a parable of the fig tree*, etc.] Take a similitude, or comparison from the fig tree, which was a tree well known in Judea; and the putting forth of its branches, leaves, and fruit, fell under the observation of everyone:

when its branch is yet tender; through the influence of the sun, and the motion of the sap, which was bound up, and congealed in the winter season:

and putteth forth leaves; from the tender branches, which swell, and open, and put forth buds, leaves, and fruit:

ye know the summer is nigh; spring being already come: the fig tree putting forth her green figs, is a sign that the winter is past, the spring is come, and summer is at hand; (see ²⁰¹¹Song of Solomon 2:11,13).

Ver. 33. *So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things,* etc.] That are mentioned above, relating to the signs of the destruction of the temple and city, and the destruction itself, with all those several things that should directly take place upon it; this is an accommodation of the above parable, similitude, or comparison:

know that it is near, even at the doors; meaning, either that “he is near”, as the Ethiopic version reads it, the son of man is near, even at the doors; or as the Vulgate Latin renders it, “in the gates”, or “doors”, and so does Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and signifies, that he was already come; for to be in the doors, or within the gates, is more than to be at the doors, or at the gates: and thus the fig tree putting forth its leaves, is a sign that summer is not only nigh, but is already come, even that part of it we call spring; for the Scripture divides the whole year only into two parts, summer and winter; so these calamities and desolations on the Jews, were a sign that the son of man was come, was in the gates, displaying his power and his glory: or the redemption and deliverance of the people of God was at hand, from the persecutions of the Jews; for till the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecutions of the Christians were chiefly from the Jews, or occasioned by them; but now, they being destroyed, the summer of deliverance was at hand: or else the kingdom of God, or a more enlarged state of the Gospel dispensation was near; the winter of the legal dispensation was over, the spring of the Gospel dispensation was come, through the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles; and now the summer of it was at hand, through the general spread of it, all over the Gentile world. So the second coming of Christ, will be a summer of joy and comfort to the saints: Christ will appear most lovely and amiable to them, he will be glorified by them, and admired in them; great grace will be brought unto them, and great glory will be put upon them; they will then enjoy full redemption and salvation: the winter of sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions, and of coldness, darkness, and desertion, will be over; the sun shall no more go down, nor the moon withdraw itself, but the Lord will be the everlasting light of his people.

Ver. 34. *Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass,* etc.] Not the generation of men in general; as if the sense was, that mankind should not cease, until the accomplishment of these things; nor the generation, or people of the Jews, who should continue to be a people, until all were fulfilled; nor the generation of Christians; as if the meaning was, that there should be always a set of Christians, or believers in Christ in the world,

until all these events came to pass; but it respects that present age, or generation of men then living in it; and the sense is, that all the men of that age should not die, but some should live

till all these things were fulfilled; (see ⁴¹⁶²⁸ Matthew 16:28) as many did, and as there is reason to believe they might, and must, since all these things had their accomplishment, in and about forty years after this: and certain it is, that John, one of the disciples of Christ, outlived the time by many years; and, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, many of the Jewish doctors now living, when Christ spoke these words, lived until the city was destroyed; as Rabban Simeon, who perished with it, R. Jochanan ben Zaccai, who outlived it, R. Zadoch, R. Ishmael, and others: this is a full and clear proof, that not anything that is said before, relates to the second coming of Christ, the day of judgment, and end of the world; but that all belong to the coming of the son of man, in the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the end of the Jewish state.

Ver. 35. *Heaven and earth shall pass away*, etc.] This is either an assertion, which will be true at the end of time; not as to the substance of the heavens and earth, which will always remain, but as to the qualities of them, which will be altered: they will be renewed and refined, but not destroyed; the bad qualities, or evil circumstances, which attend them through the sin of man, will be removed and pass away, but they themselves will continue in being: or is a comparative expression, and the sense is, that the heavens and the earth, and the ordinances thereof, than which nothing can be more firm and strong, being fixed and supported by God himself, shall sooner pass away, than anything asserted and predicted by Christ shall:

but my words shall not pass away; be vain and empty, and unaccomplished; which is true of anything, and everything spoken by Christ; and especially here regards all that he had said concerning the calamities that should befall the Jews, before, at, or upon the destruction of their nation, city, and temple; and the design of the expression, is to show the certainty, unalterableness, and sure accomplishment of these things; (see ²⁸¹¹⁵ Jeremiah 31:36).

Ver. 36. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man*, etc.] Which is to be understood, not of the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the last judgment; but of the coming of the son of man, to take vengeance on the Jews, and of their destruction; for the words manifestly regard the

date of the several things going before, which only can be applied to that catastrophe, and dreadful desolation: now, though the destruction itself was spoken of by Moses and the prophets, was foretold by Christ, and the believing Jews had some discerning of its near approach; (see ⁸⁰⁰⁵Hebrews 10:25) yet the exact and precise time was not known: it might have been: calculated to a year by Daniel's weeks, but not to the day and hour; and therefore our Lord does not say of the year, but of the day and hour no man knows; though the one week, or seven years, being separated from the rest, throws that account into some perplexity; and which perhaps is on purpose done, to conceal the precise time of Jerusalem's destruction: nor need it be wondered at, notwithstanding all the hints given, that the fatal day should not be exactly known beforehand; when those who have lived since, and were eyewitnesses of it, are not agreed on what day of the month it was; for, as Dr. Lightfoot ^{f1411} observes, Josephus ^{f1412} says,

“that the temple perished the “tenth” day of “Lous”, a day fatal to the temple, as having been on that day consumed in flames, by the king of Babylon.”

And yet Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai, who was also at the destruction of it, as well as Josephus, with all the Jewish writers, say it was on the “ninth of Ab”; for of this day they ^{f1413} say, five things happened upon it:

“On the “ninth of Ab” it was decreed concerning our fathers, that they should not enter into the land (of Canaan), the first and second temple were destroyed, Bither was taken, and the city ploughed up.”

Though the words of R. Jochanan, cited by the doctor, refer to the first, and not to the second temple, and should have been rendered thus:

“If I had been in the generation (which fixed the fast for the destruction of the first temple), I would not have fixed it but on the tenth (of Ab); for, adds he, the greatest part of the temple was burnt on that day; but the Rabbins rather regarded the beginning of the punishment ^{f1414} .”

And so the fasting of Rabbi, and R. Joshua ben Levi, on the “ninth” and “tenth” days, were on account of the first temple; for they were under the same difficulty about the one, as the other:

no, not the angels of heaven; who dwell there, always behold the face of God, stand in his presence ready to do his will, and are made acquainted with many of his designs, and are employed in the executing of them, and yet know not the time of God's vengeance on the Jews; to this agrees the sense that is given of the day of vengeance in (²³⁵⁴Isaiah 63:4) it is asked ^{f1415},

“what is the meaning of these words, “the day of vengeance is in my heart?” Says R. Jochanan, to my heart I have revealed it, to the members I have not revealed it: says R. Simeon ben Lakish, to my heart I have revealed it, *ytyl gal trçh ykal ml* , “to the ministering angels I have not revealed it”.”

The Ethiopic version adds here, “nor the son”, and so the Cambridge copy of Beza's; which seems to be transcribed from (⁴¹³²Mark 13:32) where that phrase stands; and must be understood of Christ as the son of man, and not as the Son of God; for as such, he lay in the bosom of the Father, and knew all his purposes and designs; for these were purposed in him: he knew from the beginning who would betray him, and who would believe in him; he knew what would befall the rejecters of him, and when that would come to pass; as he must know also the day of the last judgment, since it is appointed by God, and he is ordained to execute it: but the sense is, that as he, as man and mediator, came not to destroy, but to save; so it was not any part of his work, as such, to know, nor had he it in commission to make known the time of Jerusalem's ruin:

but my Father only; to the exclusion of all creatures, angels and men; but not to the exclusion of Christ as God, who, as such, is omniscient; nor of the Holy Spirit, who is acquainted with the deep things of God, the secrets of his heart, and this among others.

Ver. 37. *But as the days of Noe were*, etc.] So Noah is usually called Noe by the Septuagint: the sense is, as were the practices of the men of that generation, in which Noah lived, so will be the practices of the men of that age, in which the son of man comes; or as the flood, which happened in the days of Noah, was sudden and unexpected; it came upon men thoughtless about it, though they had warning of it; and was universal, swept them all away, excepting a few that were saved in the ark:

so shall also the coming of the son of man be; to take vengeance on the Jews, on a sudden, at an unawares, when they would be unthoughtful

about it; though they were forewarned of it by Christ and his apostles, and their destruction be as universal; all would be involved in it, excepting a few, that were directed a little before, to go out of the city of Jerusalem to Pella; where they were saved, as Noah and his family were in the ark.

Ver. 38. *For as in the days that were before the flood,* etc.] Not all the days before the flood, from the creation of the world; but those immediately preceding it, a century or two before it:

they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage: not that these civil actions of life were criminal in themselves, had care been taken that they were not abused. It is lawful to eat and drink, provided it be in moderation, and not to excess; and to marry, and give in marriage, when the laws, rules, and ends thereof, are observed: and therefore this must be understood, either of their wholly giving themselves up to the pleasures of life, and lusts of the flesh, without any concern about the affairs of religion, the worship and glory of God, the welfare of their souls and their approaching danger, of which Noah had given them warning; or of their luxury and intemperance, in eating and drinking, and of their libidinous and unlawful marriages; for the word here used for eating, signifies eating after the manner of brute beasts: they indulged themselves in a brutish way, in gluttony and drunkenness; and it is certain from the account given of them, in (^{GEN}Genesis 6:2,4) that they entered into unlawful marriages, and unclean copulations: wherefore these things may be spoken of them, as what were really sinful and wicked, and denote a course of sinning, a constant practice of these sins of intemperance and lust, and which is still more fully expressed in the next clause:

until the day that Noe entered into the ark. The Arabic version renders it, “the ship”; the vessel which God directed him to make, for the saving of himself and family. Now the men of that generation persisted in their wicked course of living, after, and notwithstanding, the warning God had given them by Noah, of the flood that would come upon them; and all the while the ark was building, even to the very day that Noah and his family, by the order of God, went into the ark.

Ver. 39. *And knew not until the flood came,* etc.] That is, they did not advert or give heed to what Noah said to them about it: they slighted and despised his warnings; they did not believe, that what he said of the flood was true; they had notice of it, but they would not know it, and therefore

God gave them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart; and so they remained, until it came upon them at once:

and took them all away; the whole world of the ungodly, every man, woman, and child, except eight persons only; Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives; for the deluge was universal, and reached to all the inhabitants of the world, who all perished in it, excepting the above persons.

So shall also the coming of the son of man be: such shall be, as it was, the case of the Jews, before the destruction of Jerusalem: they gave themselves up to all manner of wickedness and uncleanness; they disregarded the warnings of Christ and his apostles; they were careless and secure of danger; they would not believe their ruin was at hand, when it was just upon them; they buoyed themselves up to the very last, that a deliverer would arise, and save them; they cried peace, peace, when sudden destruction was nigh; even of them all, their nation, city, and temple, a few only excepted, as in the days of Noah: and though they were so much like the men of that generation, yet they themselves say of them, that

“the generation of the flood have no part in the world to come, nor shall they stand in judgment, according to (~~GEN~~ Genesis 6:3) ^{f1416}.”

Ver. 40. *Then shall two be in the field*, etc.] About their proper business, of husbandry, ploughing, or sowing, or any other rural employment:

the one shall be taken; not by the preaching of the Gospel, into the kingdom of God, or Gospel dispensation; though such a distinction God makes, by the ministry of the word, accompanied by his Spirit and power; nor by angels, to meet Christ in the air, and to be introduced into his kingdom and glory; but by the eagles, the Roman army, and either killed or carried captive by them:

and the other left; not in a state of nature and unregeneracy, as many are, to whom the Gospel is preached; nor with devils at the last day, to be thrust down by them into the infernal regions; but by the Romans, being by some remarkable providence, or another, delivered out of their hands; which was the case of some few, and these of the meaner sort; and therefore persons of a rural life and occupation are instanced in.

Ver. 41. *Two women shall be grinding at the mill*, etc.] Though the word women is not in the Greek text, yet it is rightly supplied by our translators,

as it is in the Persic version; for the word rendered grinding, is in the feminine gender, and was the work of women, as appears both from the Scripture, (^{<2115>}Exodus 11:5, ^{<2301>}Isaiah 47:1,2) and from several passages in the Jewish writings, concerning which their canons run thus ^{f1417};

“These are the works which a woman is to do for her husband, **t nj wj** , “she must grind”, and bake, and wash, and boil, and make his bed, etc.”

And elsewhere it is asked ^{f1418},

“how does she grind? she sits at the mill, and watches the flour, but she does not grind, or go after a beast, that so the mill may not stop; but if their custom is to grind at a hand mill, she may grind. The sanhedrim order this to poor people; for if she brings one handmaid, or money, or goods, sufficient to purchase, she is not obliged to grind, etc.”

Frequent mention is made, of women grinding together at the same mill: a case is put concerning two women grinding at an hand mill ^{f1419}, and various rules are given about it; as, that ^{f1420}

“a woman may lend her neighbour that is suspected of eating the fruits of the seventh year after time, a meal sieve, a fan, a mill, or a furnace, but she may not winnow, nor “grind with her”.”

Which it supposes she might do, if she was not suspected: again ^{f1421},

“the wife of a plebeian, **t nj wj** , “may grind” with the wife of a learned man, in the time that she is unclean, but not when she is clean.”

Nor was this the custom of the Jews only, for women to grind, but also of other countries, as of the Abyssines ^{f1422}, and of both Greeks and Barbarians ^{f1423}:

the one shall be taken, and the other left; as before, one shall be taken by the Romans, and either put to death, or carried captive; and the other shall escape their hands, through the singular providence of God. The Ethiopic version, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel add, “two shall be in one bed, one shall be taken, and the other left”; but these words are not in the copies of Matthew in common, but are taken out of (^{<2173>}Luke 17:34) though they are in the Cambridge copy of Beza’s, and in one of Stephens’s.

Ver. 42. *Watch therefore*, etc.] Since the time of this desolation is so uncertain, and since it will come upon the Jews unawares, and some will escape, whilst others perish; for the words are plainly an inference from what precedes, and clearly relate to things going before, and are not a transition to a new subject:

for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come; to avenge himself of the unbelieving Jews, and fulfil what he in person, and by his apostles, had predicted and warned them of: though I will not deny, but that what follows may be much better accommodated and applied to the second coming of Christ, and the last judgment, and the behaviour of men with regard to both, than anything said before; and it may be our Lord's intention, to lead his disciples gradually, and as it were imperceptibly, to the last scene of things on earth, to make way for the parables and description of the future judgment, in the next chapter; still keeping in view, and having reference to, the subject he had been so long upon.

Ver. 43. *But know this*, etc.] Or you do know this: this may be illustrated by supposing a case well known to men, and in which common prudence would direct a man how to behave:

that if the good man of the house, or householder, or master of the family, *had known in what watch the thief would come*; whether at the first, second, third, or fourth watch; for the night was divided into four watches; had he any previous notice given by any of the associates of the thief, or by those that had overheard, or by any means had got intelligence of his design and measures, and the time of his pursuing them,

he would have watched; in every watch either in person, or by employing others, or both:

and would not have suffered his house to be broken up: or “dug through”; (see ¹³²⁴⁶Job 24:16) concerning which, there is a law in (¹²²¹²Exodus 22:2) and is explained by the Jewish canonists thus:

“He that comes in by digging, whether by day or by night, there is no blood for him (i.e. to be shed for him, if he is killed); but if the master of the house, or any other man kill him, they are free; and every man has power to kill him, whether on a weekday, or on a sabbath day; and with whatsoever death he can put him to, as it is said, there is no blood for him, (¹²²¹²Exodus 22:2). And one that comes in, **trtjmb**, “by digging”, or a

thief that is found in the midst of a man's roof, or in his court, or within his hedge, whether in the day or in the night, (may be killed;) and wherefore is it called digging? because it is the way of most thieves to come in by digging in the night ^{f1424}.”

Wherefore no doubt since the master of the house had such a law on his side, he would never suffer, if possible, his house to be entered by digging, when he had, especially, any previous notice of it. Now the application of this case, or parabolical way of speaking, is to the coming of Christ, and the watchfulness of every good man who has notice of it, that he may not be surprised with it, but be in a readiness to receive him. The coming of the son of man, is here represented by the coming of the thief in the night: but when he is compared to a thief, this is not to be understood in a bad sense, in which Satan is called one, who comes to kill and to destroy the souls of men; and likewise heretics and false teachers, and everyone that climbs up, and gets into the church of God in a wrong way; but this only respects the manner of Christ's coming, which is like that of a thief, secretly, suddenly, and at unawares. The “good man of the house”, or householder, is every Christian, or believer in Christ, who has a house to look after, his own soul, the spiritual affairs and everlasting salvation of it, things of moment and concern unto him: and as the Christians, before the destruction of Jerusalem, had notices of Christ's coming in that way, by our Lord's predictions, by the hints the apostles gave, to refresh their memories with them, and by the signs of the times and voices that were heard; so the saints have of Christ's coming to judgment: wherefore as it became the one, so it does the other, to watch, to be upon their guard, to be in a readiness, to have their loins girt about, and their lights burning, and they like men that wait for their Lord; that so when he comes, their houses may not be broken up, may not be surprised, and the several powers and faculties of their souls may not be thrown into disorder and confusion; wherefore it follows,

Ver. 44. *Therefore be ye also ready*, etc.] Or prepared for the coming of the son of man; which as it is said to be like a thief in the night, expresses the suddenness of it, may excite to watchfulness and readiness; which readiness is to be understood, not of a readiness to do the will and work of God, though this is absolutely necessary; as to watch and pray, to hear the word preached, to confess Christ, and give a reason of the hope that is in us, to communicate to the support of the cause and interest of Christ, and to suffer for his sake; but of a preparedness to meet the Lord in the way of

his judgments, when desolating judgments are coming on the earth, such as these in Jerusalem; by faith and trust in the power, providence, and care of God; by humiliation before him, and resignation to his will: and if this can be applied to a readiness for a future state after death; for the second coming of Christ, and last judgment; this lies not in a dependence on the absolute mercy of God; nor in an external humiliation for sin; nor in an abstinence from grosser sins, or in mere negative holiness; nor in any outward, legal, civil, and moral righteousness; nor in a submission to Gospel ordinances; nor in a mere profession of religion; but in being in Christ, having on his righteousness, and being washed in his blood; and also in regeneration and sanctification, in having true knowledge of Christ, and faith in him; for all which it becomes men to be concerned, as also all believers to be actually, as well as habitually ready; being in the lively exercise of grace, and cheerful discharge of duty, though without trusting to either. And such a readiness in either branch of it, is not of themselves, but lies in the grace of God, which gives a meetness for glory; and in the righteousness of Christ, the fine linen, clean and white, which being granted by him, his people are made ready for him: and as for their faith, and the exercise of it, and their constant performance of duty, these are not from the strength of nature and the power of freewill, but from the Spirit of God and his grace; who makes ready a people prepared for the Lord, and all according to the ancient settlements of grace, in which provision is made for the vessels of mercy, afore prepared for glory: though there should be a studious concern in men for such readiness, for nothing is more certain than death, and nothing more uncertain than when it will be; and after death, no readiness can be had, but he that is then righteous, shall be righteous still, and he that is filthy, shall be filthy still, and a deathbed is by no means to be trusted to; and though a person may not be snatched away suddenly, but may have space given him to repent, yet if grace is not given him, to repent and believe in Christ, he never will; the grave is ready for men, and in a little time all will be brought to this house, appointed for all living, where there is no wisdom, knowledge, and device; and therefore whatever we are directed to do, should be now done, with all that might, and strength, and grace, that is given us; to which may be added, that after death comes judgment; the day is fixed, the judge is appointed, and all must stand before his judgment seat; and nothing is more sure than that Christ will come a second time, to judge both quick and dead; and happy will those be that are ready; they will be received by Christ into everlasting habitations, and be for ever with him: and miserable will those be, who will

not be ready, who will not have the oil of grace in their hearts with their lamps, nor the wedding garment on them; they will be shut out, and bid to depart into everlasting burnings: how fit and proper is such an advice and exhortation as this, “be ye also ready”. A readiness the Jews report Bath Kol, or the voice from heaven, gave out concerning the Israelites.

“Bath Kol (say ^{f1425} they) went out, and said to them, *abh μl w[h yyj l ^ynmwzm μkl wk*, “ye are all of you ready for the life of the world to come.”

And elsewhere it is said of Bath Kol, that it went forth and affirmed of some particular Rabbins, that they were ready for eternal life; as of Ketiah bar Shalom, R. Eleazar ben Durdia, and R. Chanina ^{f1426}:

for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh: this is true of his coming in power to destroy Jerusalem, and of his second coming to judgment. The Jews say much the same of the coming of the Messiah, whom they expect:

“there are three things, they say ^{f1427}, which come, *t [dh j syhb*, “without knowledge”, or unthought of, at an unawares; and they are these, the Messiah, anything that is found, and a scorpion.”

Ver. 45. *Who then is a faithful and wise servant*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin adds, “do you think?” and is a question put to the disciples, which they might apply to themselves: in (~~cp126~~ Luke 12:42), it is spoken in answer to a question of Peter’s, in relation to the above exhortation, whether it was spoken to them, or to all; and by this answer, it looks as if it was more especially designed for them, though it may be applied to other. The “servant” is there called a “steward”, for such a servant is meant; and a name that is very proper for the apostles and ministers of the word, who are stewards of the mysteries of Christ, and of the manifold grace of God; and whose characters are, that they are “faithful”: for this is required in stewards, that they be faithful to the trust reposed in them; as ministers are, when they preach the pure Gospel of Christ, and the whole of it; conceal no part, nor keep anything of it; seek not to please men, but God; neither seek their own things, their ease, honour, and profit, but the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the good of souls; and abide by the truths, cause, and interest of a Redeemer, at all hazards. And they are “wise”, who know and are well instructed in divine things; who make Christ the main subject of their ministry; who improve their talents and time for their master’s use,

and the advantage of those that are under their care; who seek for, and deliver acceptable words and matter; and manage their whole trust, so as to be able to give in a good account of their stewardship another day. The post that such a person is put in, and the work he is to do, follow:

whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household; or “family”, the church of God, which is the household of God, and of faith, in which are believers of various growths and sizes; some fathers, some young men, some children; and over these, the ministers are, by their Lord, made and placed as rulers; not as lords and tyrants over God’s heritage, to govern them in an arbitrary way, but as over them in the Lord, to rule them according to the word of God, and the laws of his house; by preaching the Gospel, administering ordinances, and keeping up his worship and the discipline of the church; and whose principal business it is,

to give them meat in due season; even “their portion” of it, as in (⁴¹²⁰Luke 12:42): for the word of God is to be cut and rightly divided, and everyone in the family, according to his age, appetite, and digestion, is to have his proper part and portion given him: it must be meat, proper food, such as is solid, substantial, and nourishing; even the wholesome words of Christ Jesus, that must be given them, and not husks and empty trash; and all in due season, in its proper time, as their cases and circumstances require, and call for; as whether weary, or uncomfortable, or in the dark, or under temptations and afflictions: for a word fitly and seasonably spoken, how useful is it!

Ver. 46. *Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh*, etc.] Whether in a way of judgment, as against Jerusalem; or at death, when he comes to remove him out of time, into eternity; or at the day of judgment, when he, the righteous judge, will give the crown of righteousness to him:

shall find so doing; acting the faithful and wise part, ruling the household of God well; giving to all wholesome food, a proper portion of it, and that in the right time.

Ver. 47. *Verily I say unto you*, etc.] Nothing is a greater truth, more certain, or to be depended on, than this; all such wise, faithful, diligent, and industrious servants may expect it:

that he, shall make him ruler over all his goods; will honour him with greater gifts, bestow a larger degree of Gospel light and knowledge on

him, make him more useful in the church below, and at last cause him to inherit all things in the other world, all glory, happiness, and bliss.

Ver. 48. *But and if that evil servant*, etc.] Or should there be an evil servant, an unwise and faithless one, who though he may have gifts and talents, yet destitute of the grace of God; and though he may be in the highest post and office in the church of God for sometimes wicked and graceless men are in such places; yet if he

shall say in his heart; secretly to himself, and with pleasure to his mind, and strengthen himself in a full persuasion of this,

my Lord delayeth his coming; and begins to think that either he will not come at all, to call him to an account for the use of his time, gifts, and talents; or if he does, it will be long first ere he will come, and visit the people of the Jews, by desolating calamities; or by death, to summon him to his bar; or at judgment, to give in his account of his stewardship.

Ver. 49. *And shall begin to smite his fellow servants*, etc.] By abusing the power lodged in him, usurping a dominion over their faith, and imposing on their consciences things which Christ has never commanded; vexing and burdening them with trifling rites and ceremonies, and other unnecessary things; wounding, grieving, offending weak minds by his conduct and example; or persecuting the saints, such of them as cannot come into everything in his way of believing and practising:

and to eat and drink with the drunken; giving himself up to luxury and intemperance; feeding himself instead of the family; serving his own belly, and not his Lord and Master Christ; living an ungodly and licentious life, altogether unbecoming the Gospel of Christ: such servants and stewards have been, and are in the church of God; but sad will be their case, when their Lord comes, as follows. Respect seems to be had either to the ecclesiastical rulers among the Jews, who went under the name of the servants of the Lord, but persecuted the apostles, and those that believed in Christ; or the “Judaizing” Christians, and false teachers, that were for imposing the ceremonies of the law upon believers; or Simon Magus, and his followers, a set of licentious, men; or all of them; who lived in this period of time, between the death of Christ, and the destruction of the temple.

Ver. 50. *The lord of that servant*, etc.] Not by redemption and grace, but by creation and profession;

shall come in a day when he looked not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of: suddenly and unexpectedly: such was his coming in wrath and vengeance on the Jewish nation; and such is his coming oftentimes by death; and such will be his coming at the day of judgment.

Ver. 51. *And shall cut him asunder*, etc.] The Persic version renders it, “he shall separate him from himself”: he shall separate soul and body by death; he shall take away all his gifts and talents from him; and remove him from his place and office, and from the church of God, and communion of the saints, and out of this world. Some think the allusion is to the cutting up of the sacrifices, and dividing them into pieces; and the sense is, that this wicked servant should have no share in the sacrifice of Christ; but should fall himself a victim to divine justice, and be used as sacrifices were; or, in other words, be severely punished for his sins; though the allusion seems rather to be to the manner of punishing treacherous and unfaithful persons, by dismembering them, cutting them in pieces, or in two: and so the Arabic version renders it, “he shall cut him in the middle”: this was certainly a way of putting persons to death; though some say it was not known to the Jews; but the following instances show the contrary. Mention is made of some that were sawn asunder, (^{<8157>}Hebrews 11:37) and the Jews say ^{f1428}, that Isaiah was sawn asunder by Manasseh; and such a kind of death is spoken of in the Targum ^{f1429}; where it is said, that

“the priests went before Mordecai, and proclaimed, saying, whoever does not salute, or wish prosperity to Mordecai, and to the Jews, **dyb[ty ^ymdh** “he shall be cut into pieces”, and his house be made a dunghill.”

And elsewhere ^{f1430} it is said of a wicked man, that they put him upon a carpenter’s block, and **wb pyrsnm**, “sawed him asunder”; and he cried out, woe, woe, woe, that I have provoked my Creator. This was also a punishment used among the Heathens, as Gataker ^{f1431}, and others out of Heathen writers, have shown. It must not here be understood literally, that this wicked servant should be put to such a corporeal death; but that he should be punished in the severest manner, and should be the object of the fierce wrath and sore displeasure of God;

and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. Luke says, “with the unbelievers” (^{<0126>}Luke 12:46): very likely both phrases were used by Christ; intimating, that such as make a profession of him, and have only a

form of godliness, without the power of it, and are wicked and hypocritical men, will share the same fate with those that believe not; and the portion of these is the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; (see ~~6218~~ Revelation 21:8) or all such persons are intended, who put on the mask of religion, and do not answer to the character they bear: and are unfaithful to the trust reposed in them, and therefore will be made examples of righteous judgment, and have their part in the lowest hell:

there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: (See Gill on “~~4034~~ Matthew 13:42”)