

Chapter XII

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

In our chapter on *The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse*, we observed that the disciples of our Lord (Peter, James, John and Andrew [Mark 13:3]) came to Him privately as He sat upon the mount of Olives to ask Him about the statement He had made concerning the buildings of the temple: *There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*. Given this opportunity, they asked, *[W]hen shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* (Matthew 24:3). These questions broadly covered the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the revelation of the antichrist, and the events of the great tribulation period that shall precede the second coming of our Lord. These events and others are the subjects of our Lord's Olivet discourse.

Since it was unlikely that they knew that there had been a partial fulfillment of the seven feasts of the Jews in the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord; and since they probably did not know that the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's vision had been fulfilled with these same

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events; and since they did not understand when or how the Kingdom would be established, this lack of understanding implies that these questions did not originate with them (as we have suggested), but with the Holy Spirit.

This sort of testimony has been seen on many occasions in the Scriptures. For example: when Mary visited Elisabeth prior to the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:41-43). Zacharias spoke similarly of the birth and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ after the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:67-79), and Simeon said, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel* (Luke 2:29-32).

The disciples were not ignorant of these matters because they were unfamiliar with the Scriptures, but because of where they stood in time. Peter and John would later be used of the Lord to write books of the New Testament under the inspiration of the Spirit of God; but immediately after the resurrection of our Lord, they did not have at their disposal all that we have at our disposal. Even if they understood some of these things, it would have been impossible for them to have known that the entire church age (of nearly two thousand years to date) would be a parenthesis between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of Daniel's prophecy, nor could they have known that this parenthesis was foreshadowed in the feast of Pentecost. It was perfectly logical for them to believe that the Lord was going to establish His Kingdom at that time, and this

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is seen in a question they asked our Lord before He ascended into heaven:

Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own [authority]. (Acts 1:6-7)

We cannot fault the disciples for their lack of understanding so soon after the resurrection because they could not, at that time, see what we have seen. They did not then have the New Testament Scriptures or the advantage of observing the fulfillment of prophecy throughout the church age. We have seen our Lord fulfill all of the prophecies of His first advent perfectly because of the Scriptural record we have in the New Testament; we have both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures at our disposal because of the advent of the printing press; we have seen our Lord's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. fulfilled; we have seen the Jews scattered among the nations of the world where they have suffered because they said, *His blood be on us, and on our children* (Matthew 27:25); we have seen two world wars in the twentieth century alone, and countless other wars from the first century to the present time; we have seen worldwide famines and earthquakes in many places; we have seen pestilences in the form of tsunamis, hurricanes, tornados, malaria, viral epidemics, and many other types of plagues; we have seen Israel resurrected out of the nations of the world and reestablished as a nation again in her own land; we have seen the gospel preached in every corner of this earth from the first century to the present; we have seen conditions as it was *in the days of Noah*, and we have seen conditions as it was *in the days of Lot*; yet, for all of the *birth pangs* that we have seen, we do not know the precise day or hour of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That information is reserved for the Father.

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The first resurrection that precedes the tribulation period could take place at any time. We know this because Israel is a nation again back in her own land, and a large number of present-day churches throughout the world have already succumbed to the great apostasy foretold by the apostles, Paul and John (II Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 3:14-19). Since the apostasy and the revelation of the antichrist are the two signs that must precede the Day of the Lord (II Thessalonians 2:1-4), this leaves but one of these signs to yet be fulfilled. Even so the true church will not observe the second of these signs because the antichrist cannot be revealed as long as that which hinders is in the way. That which hinders is the presence of a discerning body of believers (indwelt by the Holy Spirit) who can know the things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-14). This hindering presence shall be removed by *our gathering together unto him*. We know this by comparing *our gathering together unto him* in II Thessalonians 2:1 with *what withholdeth* in II Thessalonians 2:6-8.

After hearing the three questions of the disciples:

... Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows [birth pangs].

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:4-14)

This is a broad sweeping prophecy. It spans the entire period of time from the first advent

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of our Lord until the second advent of our Lord. It speaks of things that existed then and of things that are taking place now. Consider the first statement, *Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.* Israel was confronted with false christs almost immediately after the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. This hoax has continued throughout the church age and will culminate with the greatest of the false christs, the antichrist.

One of the first of the false christs, following the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, was Herod Agrippa I. The Scriptures tell of his persecution of the church (Acts 12:1), of his killing of James the brother of John (Acts 12:2), and of his imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:3-5). They also record the circumstances of his death (Acts 12:20-23), but they do not tell us he was accepted as the Christ by the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, and the people of the nation of Israel. This is implied but not stated in the account of his death in the book of Acts (12:22-23). Even so we have the information that Herod Agrippa was a false christ from a history that was written by the Roman Emperor Tiberius Claudius. It was translated into English by Robert Graves in 1935:

I have no dramatic gift, like my brother Germanicus: I am merely a historian and no doubt most people would call me, in general, dull and prosy, but I have come to a point in my story where the record of bare facts unimproved by oratorical beauties should stir the wonder of my readers as greatly as they stirred me at the time. Let me first tell in what an exalted mood King Herod Agrippa came up from Jerusalem to Caesarea to the festival that had been prepared in honor of my birthday. He was nursing a secret pride so great that it almost choked him. The foundations of the great edifice that he had so long dreamed of raising, the Empire of the East, were grandly and firmly laid at last. He now had only to speak the word and the walls would (these are the very words he used to his Queen Cypros) "shoot up white and splendid into the dark blue sky, the crystal roof would close over it, and lovely gardens and cool colonnades and lily-ponds would surround it, spreading out as far as the enraptured eye could reach." Inside all would be beryl and opal and sapphire and sardonyx and pure gold and in the mighty Hall of Judgment would blaze a diamond throne, the throne of the Messiah, whom men had hitherto known as Herod

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Agrippa.

He had already revealed himself, in secret, to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, and they had all with one accord bowed themselves to the ground and glorified God and acknowledged him as the prophesied Messiah. He could now publicly reveal himself to the Jewish nation, and to the whole world. His word would go out: "The Day of Deliverance is at hand, saith the Anointed of the Lord. Let us break the yoke of the Ungodly." There were now two hundred thousand Jews trained in the use of weapons in Herod's dominions alone, and thousands more in Egypt, Syria and the East; and the Jew fighting in the name of his God, as the history of the Maccabees had shown, is heroic to the point of madness. Never was there a better disciplined race. Nor were arms and armor wanting: Herod had added to the seventy thousand suits of armor that he had found in Antipas's treasury two hundred thousand more, besides those that he had taken from the Greeks. The fortifications of Jerusalem were not complete, but in less than six months the city would be made impregnable. Even after my order to cease work Herod had secretly continued hollowing out great store chambers under the Temple and driving long tunnels under the walls to points more than a mile outside, so that if ever it came to a siege the garrison could make surprise sorties and attack an investing army from the rear. (*Claudius the God and his wife Messalina*, translated by Robert Graves, Random House, New York, 1935, 1962, pg. 315, 316)

This account of Herod's aspirations and the Jews' response is quite revealing considering the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially given the fact that every prophecy in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Lord's first advent was fulfilled perfectly and completely in the life and ministry of our Lord; and given the fact that our Lord had established Who He was with signs and wonders to the amazement of the common people and the consternation of the Jewish leaders; and given the fact that He had spoken to the nation of Israel with a wisdom that had confounded them, from the least to the greatest: it is incredulous, from a human point of view, that Jesus of Nazareth was rejected and Herod Agrippa, a pompous egomaniac from the lineage of Esau, was accepted as the Jewish Messiah by the nation of Israel less than fifteen years after they had crucified our Lord.

The acceptance of Herod Agrippa as the Messiah was just the beginning of the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy concerning false christs. Herod would simply be one of many throughout

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the ages from the first advent of our Lord until His second advent. Claudius' account, though unknown to him, clearly reveals the spiritual blindness of all unredeemed men. This blindness is a part of the sentence of death that was imposed upon the human family because Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in disobedience to God. Nevertheless the spiritual death and spiritual blindness that plagues the human family can be corrected by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Claudius' account of the death of Herod has provided history with a view of Herod's self-deception; it has provided history with a view of the Jews' deception; it has provided some of Herod's observations as he lay dying; and it has provided history with Herod's final letter to Claudius.

The Jews put on sackcloth and lay in their tens of thousands prostrate on the ground about the Palace, even in the terrible heat. Agrippa saw them from the window of the upper room where his bed was laid and began to weep for them. "Poor Jews," he said. "You have waited a thousand years, and must now wait a thousand more, perhaps two thousand, before your day of glory breaks. This has been a false dawn. I deceived myself and I deceived you." He called for pen and paper and wrote me a letter while he still had strength to hold the pen. I have the letter here before me with the others he wrote me and it is pitiful to compare the handwritings -- the others boldly and decisively written, line under line as regular as a flight of steps, and this scrawled crookedly, each letter jagged and broken with pain, like confessions written by criminals after they have been put on the rack or flogged with the cat-o-nine-tails. It is short:

"My last letter: I am dying. My body is full of maggots. Forgive your old friend the Brigand, who loved you dearly, yet secretly plotted to take the East away from you. Why did I do this? Because Japhet and Shem can live as brothers, but each must rule in his own house. The West would have remained yours from Rhodes to Britain. You would have been able to rid Rome of all of the Gods and customs of the East: then and only then could the ancient liberty that you prize so much have returned to you. I have failed. I played too dangerous a game. Marmoset, you are a fool, but I envy your folly: it is a sane folly. Now I charge you with my dying breath not to revenge yourself on my family. My son Agrippa is innocent: he knows nothing of my ambitions, and neither do my daughters.

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Cyprus did all that she could do to dissuade me. The best course for you now is to appear to know nothing. Treat all your Eastern allies as faithful allies still. With Herod gone what are they? Adders, but their fangs are drawn. They trusted me, but they have no trust in the Parthian. As for my dominions, make them a Roman province again, as in the time of Tiberius. Do not injure my honour by returning them to my uncle Antipas. To appoint my son Agrippa as my successor would be dangerous, but honour him in some way or other for my sake. Do not put my dominions under the rule of Syria, under my enemy Marsus. Rule them yourself, Marmoset. Make Felix your governor. Felix is a nobody and will do nothing either wise or foolish. I can write little more. My fingers fail me. I am in torment. Do not weep for me: I have had a glorious life and regret nothing but my one single folly -- I underrated the pride and power and jealousy of the ever-living God of Israel, that I bore myself towards Him like any foolish philosophizing Gadarene Greek. Now farewell for the last time, Tiberius Claudius, my friend whom I love more truly than you ever supposed. Farewell, little Marmoset, my schoolfellow, and trust nobody, for nobody about you is worthy of your trust. Your dying friend Herod Agrippa, surnamed The Brigand." (*ibid.*, pg. 320-321)

The value of this bit of history is enormous, not because it attests that Herod was a false christ, but because it gives us the personal testimony of a false christ, and it provides us with a view of the absolute spiritual blindness and self-deception of those who become false christ. It also provides us with a view of the spiritual blindness of those who follow them. This information is not needed to corroborate the testimony of the Scriptures, but it does fit perfectly into the description the apostle Paul provided in his second epistle to Timothy: *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived* (II Timothy 3:13). The apostle Peter also supplies us with a similar description of those who mock the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the*

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heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Peter 3:3-7).

It is evident that both those who follow false christs and those who deny the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ are plagued by the same malady: they are spiritually blind and they are spiritually dead. Since apostasy is a departure from the truth; and since it can only occur in the realm of the truth; and since it is impossible for genuine believers to apostatize, apostasy does not occur all at once. It creeps in by a subtle neglect of the truth. Often this occurs when one thing is emphasized to the neglect of another. Thus churches which once preached the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ can depart from the truth through failing to follow Paul's instructions to Timothy: *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (II Timothy 4:2-4).*

This brings us to some basic instructions in our Lord's Olivet discourse:

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:9-14)

The events of the last days that are contained in our Lord's Olivet discourse are not in chronological order. Some things that are written together will not be fulfilled together. This portion of Scripture provides a good example of that prophetic principle.

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In the first sentence (*Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake*) we have an expression of the anti-semitism that has been directed against the Jews by organized religion and by political leaders at various times, following the crucifixion of Christ. It is evident that these persecutions also included believers in Jesus Christ when we compare the accounts of the Olivet discourse in the Gospels of Mark and Luke with this account in the Gospel of Matthew (Mark 13:9-11; Luke 21:12-19).

The Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and some Protestant churches have persecuted the Jews as well as some genuine believers in Jesus Christ at various times throughout the history of these organizations. The Jews were often called *Christ killers* and some genuine believers were called *heretics*. It is no wonder that so many Jews hate the name of Jesus. They have been systematically searched out and abused in that name by churches that should have had some compassion for them; but there was no compassion because these churches did not understand the saving grace of Jesus Christ, or the elective purpose of God:

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:26-36)

Salvation is not effected by the ritual and form that has become so much a part of

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traditional church dogma. It is accomplished by the preaching of the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God. This means that the forced baptisms of many Jews by so-called Christian churches accomplished nothing but a form of self-preservation for those Jews who submitted to them. These baptisms certainly did not produce salvation.

The hatred of the Jews did not exist at the beginning of the church age. At that time it was the Jews who were the persecutors, not the Christians. Many of the Jews, like Saul of Tarsus and the Sanhedrin, directed their wrath against Jews who had become Christians (Acts 6:8-15). However as the church gained in stature and political power this changed. This change had been foretold by our Lord's parable of the mustard seed (Luke 13:18-19), which was a parable about unparalleled church growth.

The mustard seed was a singular seed that had been planted for the healing of the nations; but when it experienced extraordinary growth, to the place where it became like a tree, it then became a desirable lodging place for the birds of the air (Matthew 13:32). *The fowls* (or birds of the air) represented the *wicked one* in our Lord's parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:4, 19). Since the birds occupied the highest positions in the mustard seed that had grown into a tree, and since the birds lodged *under the shadow of it* (Mark 4:32), it is evident that the birds of our Lord's parable represented an ecclesiastical hierarchy within the church that operated in the lie of the devil. It was these leaders who persecuted the Jews as well as some genuine believers in Jesus Christ according to our text in the Lord's Olivet discourse.

In the second sentence of our text, Matthew 24:10 (*And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*), we have a description of conditions that

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shall arise during the great tribulation period. Our Lord described these conditions when He sent the disciples out to preach, early in His public ministry; but as we have seen before, His instructions were not just for the twelve, but for the twelve times twelve thousand:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.* (Matthew 10:16-23, emphasis mine)

In the next two sentences of our text, Matthew 24:11 (*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because [the] iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*), we read of conditions that shall lead to the apostasy of the churches prior to the first resurrection and the revelation of the antichrist. The message of the false prophets in our text is the *other gospel* of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. This *gospel* required the performance of ritual and law for salvation in violation of the principle of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from the deeds of the law. Thus it was rooted in the lie of the devil. Remember, the serpent promised Eve she would live and not die if she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the moral concepts thus gained would make her like God. Solomon called this concept *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*, and our Lord called it *the iniquity* in our text. Thus we understand that wherever *the iniquity* abounds, *the love of many shall wax cold*. This condition produces the apostasy we spoke of earlier in this

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chapter.

The word *love* in this verse comes from the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* is defined for us in the fourth chapter of the first epistle of John: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (I John 4:7-11)*. It is self-evident that when the efforts of man are maximized with *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, then the Person and the work of Jesus Christ are minimized. Man no longer sees himself as he is, a sinner, but as one who merits a relationship with God because of personal righteousness. Consequently the love of Christ fades and apostasy ensues.

It is interesting to note in the four sentences of our text that we have considered thus far, that we have gone from the church age to the tribulation period and back again to the church age. This brings us to the next sentence in our text (*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*), which takes us back again to conditions that shall be brought to fulfillment during the tribulation period. Those who endure to the end are those who refuse to worship the antichrist. Those who worship him will receive his mark that they might buy or sell. In this regard our Lord said, *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matthew 10:39)*.

In the last sentence of our text, Matthew 24:14 (*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be*

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preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come), we have a promise of the preaching of the gospel that will find its fulfillment in both the church age with preaching by faithful churches, and during the tribulation period with the preaching of the one hundred and forty-four thousand: who will preach unto the end.

Now we come to our Lord's answer to the second question of the disciples, *and what shall be the sign of thy coming?*

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:15-30)

The antichrist and the false prophet will come to Jerusalem at the midpoint of the great tribulation period. It appears that this visit will be occasioned by the dedication of a newly constructed temple in Jerusalem. It appears that this construction will be allowed under the terms of the covenant which the antichrist will make with the Jews for seven years (Daniel 9:27). This

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is consistent with the fact that the antichrist will be a false christ. The Scriptures declare that the *BRANCH* (which is Christ) will build the temple in Jerusalem (Zechariah 6:12-13), yet the Lord will not come again to this earth until after the tribulation period. Even so on the occasion of the visit of the antichrist and the false prophet, they will place an idol of the antichrist in the temple, and the false prophet will cause this image to speak (Revelation 13:15). This is *the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet*.

The religious world of both Jews and Christians is looking for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. From the writings of the apostle Paul, we know that the antichrist will sit in the temple in Jerusalem and show himself to be the Christ with signs and lying wonders (II Thessalonians 2:4, 9). So how do we reconcile the fact that the *BRANCH* (Jesus Christ) will build the temple, and the antichrist will sit in the temple before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth?

The answer to this question lies in the fact that one is an earthly temple and the other is a temple made up of *living stones*. The apostle Paul declared *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ* (I Corinthians 3:11), and Peter wrote:

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. (I Peter 2:1-8)

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When we combine these two portions of Scripture, the implication is that our Lord has been building His temple with *living stones* from the time that He laid the foundation with His crucifixion, burial and resurrection from the dead, and with His giving of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers on the day of Pentecost. This agrees with the fact that the apostle Paul wrote, *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and [have been built] upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building [being fitted together grows] unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also [are being built] together for an habitation of God through the Spirit* (Ephesians 2:19-22). Thus each believer in Jesus Christ (from Adam until the end of the age) is a part of that temple, and this agrees with the description of the New Jerusalem in the book of the Revelation:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Revelation 21:1-4)

Later in this chapter John is told, *Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife*. The Lamb's wife is the new Jerusalem. She is described with gates named for the twelve tribes of Israel and with foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles. Her inhabitants are they whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. This city is populated with the saints of all ages and this agrees with the testimony of the writer of the book of Hebrews:

For ye are not come unto the mount that might [not] be touched, and that burned

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with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18-24)

If the temple of God (that was prophesied to be built by the *BRANCH*) is a temple made up of living stones (of both the Old and the New Testament saints) that have been being built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ from the time of the giving of His Holy Spirit to indwell the redeemed, after His crucifixion, burial and resurrection, then that leaves the building of the temple in the city of Jerusalem under the authority of the antichrist. While this proposition may seem strange, the Scriptures imply the antichrist will have the authority to do this. This implication is found in the covenant the antichrist will make with Israel that will commence the seventieth week of Daniel's vision, and it is found in Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (II Thessalonians 2:1-4)

When the Jews observe the abomination of desolation in the earthly temple, this will be the primary sign of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. If they have learned anything from their exile into the nations of the world, they should have learned not to be idolaters, but all will not have learned that lesson. Two-thirds of the nation will seek to save their lives and will thus

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lose them, while one-third of the nation of Israel will flee Jerusalem when they see the *abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place* (Matthew 24:15), for Zechariah wrote:

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. (Zechariah 13:8-9)

In this regard our Lord said, *Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it* (Luke 17:28-33).

Some expositors have made Lot's flight from Sodom a portrayal of the first resurrection, but this does not fit the conditions of the first resurrection. When the rapture takes place, believers will not have a choice to remain behind like Lot's wife. They will all be resurrected, beginning with the dead in Christ and extending to those who are alive and remain (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). However when the antichrist sets up an image of himself in the temple in Jerusalem, which is spiritually called Sodom, the place from which Lot fled (Revelation 11:8), then the Jews will have a choice to seek to remain in Jerusalem or they may leave according to our Lord's command. Those who refuse to worship the antichrist and receive his mark will flee into

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the wilderness where God will preserve them for the last three and one-half years of the great tribulation period (Revelation 12:13-16); but those who are like Lot's wife will remain in Jerusalem, because the things they have prayed for over the centuries will be in Jerusalem. The antichrist will have brought a false sense of peace to the city (I Thessalonians 5:3); the temple will have been built; and there will be an individual who has convinced them that he is the Christ sitting *in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God* (II Thessalonians 2:4). Thus our Lord continued:

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

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:31-51)

Throughout our study of the second coming of our Lord we have dealt with the problem

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of events being written together, but not being fulfilled together. In this final portion of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we are again faced with this problem. The first sentence of the above portion of Scripture (*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*) seems to be a part of the second coming of our Lord described in the previous verses (on page 140), but it is not. It is actually a description of the first resurrection, which is portrayed in the first of the last three feasts of the Jews, the feast of Trumpets. After that statement there is a break in the context, and our Lord spoke a parable about a fig tree. Then there is a return to the context of the first resurrection, where the days before the first resurrection are compared with the days of Noah and the apostasy of the last days of the church age, which shall precede the first resurrection. Thus our Lord said, *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 24:45-51). These shifts in subjects by our Lord can be very disconcerting to the novice, but analysis of prophecy is not for novices. In fact it is not an easy subject even for the seasoned teacher of the Word of God.

Between the days that will be like the days of Noah (which describes earthly conditions and

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attitudes in the churches leading up to the first resurrection) and the sound of the trumpet (which is associated with the first resurrection), our Lord spoke the parable of the fig tree:

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (Matthew 24:32-36)

Israel is the fig tree according to the visual lesson supplied by our Lord in the cursing of the fig tree on His way into Jerusalem, a few days before His crucifixion. Our Lord verified that it was the nation of Israel that He cursed when He said, *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*, a few days after the cursing of the fig tree. Later, after the wholesale rejection of our Lord as the Christ by the nation of Israel (when they crucified Him), we have seen this curse fulfilled in the Romans' siege of Jerusalem and the dispersion of those Jews who survived the siege in 70 A.D. The Jews remained buried in the Gentile nations of the world for a long time after their dispersion by the Romans, according to the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, because her bones were very dry. Then, in partial fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, Israel was resurrected from her burial ground among the nations of the world on May 14, 1948. At the present time Israel is a nation again back in her own land, but she does not yet possess all of the land that God promised her. This possession will probably occur during the millennial reign of Christ.

The Arab world and many other nations of the world are hostile towards Israel. They think she is the source of the problem in the Middle East, but Israel is not the problem. The problem rests in the nations of this world which are in rebellion against the promises of God, because of their unbelief. God gave the land of Canaan to Israel, not because she deserved it, but because

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it was His will to do so. This was an expression of His grace, just as salvation is an expression of His grace. The world is blind to the grace of God, so it cannot understand why the Jews should have claim to the land of Canaan, especially since they were exiled from it. Nevertheless God also promised to restore Israel to the land whenever it became necessary to exile her into the Gentile nations of the world because of her disobedience and idolatry. Consequently the United Nations' mandate in 1947 to partition Palestine was simply God's method of using the nations of this world to fulfill His will, because *the powers that be are ordained of God* (Romans 13:1).

When the United Nations voted to partition Palestine in November of 1947, the Arab nations declared that when the British would leave Palestine in May of 1948, if Israel declared herself a nation again among the nations of the world, then they would, according to Haj Amin Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, *drive the Jews into the sea*. (*O Jerusalem*, by Larry Collins & Dominique LaPierre, Pocket Book Division of Simon & Schuster, 1972, pg. 83) Nearly sixty years later, after numerous wars in which she was decidedly the underdog, Israel (*this generation*) is still a nation in the land that was promised to Abraham. When one considers the land mass and populations of the Middle East occupied by the Arabs (Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, to name some of them) compared to the land mass and population of Israel, it is only by God's grace and the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ that Israel exists as a nation in the Middle East.

In the days of Abraham, four hundred years before Israel became a nation, God promised him a land that was then occupied by the Amorites (Genesis 15:16-21). This promise was later confirmed to Isaac and then to Jacob, so that in the days of Moses, Israel was delivered from Egypt and became a nation among the nations of the world. As the Jews prepared to enter the

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land, after their exodus from Egypt, God made a covenant with Israel (Deuteronomy chapters 29 & 30). One of the conditions of the covenant was exile for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:36-37). This was to occur if Israel fell prey to the idolatry of the inhabitants of the land. God promised that if this were to occur, the Jews would be deported and they would serve the false gods of the Gentile nations of this world. This has occurred three times in her history, as we have previously noted. However these exiles were matters of discipline and were never meant to be permanent (Hebrews 12:6-8). So, despite the exiles of the past, now that Israel is back in the land that was promised to Abraham, Israel will never be eradicated by the nations of this world. She will possess the land God gave her unto the coming of Jesus Christ. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away* (Luke 21:33).

The reestablishment of Israel as a nation in her own land places us, prophetically speaking, in the latter part of the latter days as we stated in our first chapter, *A Key to the Prophetic Scriptures*. This was the one event, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., that many professing Christians never expected to happen. As a result of this, many churches have had a tendency to spiritualize the promises God gave to Israel. They claimed these promises were fulfilled in the church. This was particularly evident in the Roman church and in many of the churches that fractured from the Roman church during the protestant reformation movement.

These concepts fall broadly into a system of interpretation called covenant theology. The basic premise of this system of thought declares that if an individual or church keeps the promises God made to Israel, then the blessings that come from keeping those promises are theirs and not Israel's. It is important to understand that there were some promises given to Israel that also

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included believers in every age. Nevertheless God's promises to Israel are God's promises to Israel. He will perform them. He cannot lie.

This brings us to the first of three parables that were a part of our Lord's Olivet discourse, recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:1-13)

The three parables are about three different groups of people. The first parable deals with the present church age; the second parable deals with the nation of Israel; and the third parable deals with the Gentile nations of this world.

The first parable takes us to the church age, which will end with the first resurrection. The five wise virgins are churches (II Corinthians 11:1-3) which, in the days of their ministries, have been empowered by the Holy Spirit (the Oil in their lamps) to do the work which the Lord committed to their trust: preaching the truth of the Word of God to a lost world. Whereas the five foolish virgins are churches which once gave forth the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit of God, but over time they have found other methods to do what they perceive to be the work of God, and any faithful testimony to Jesus Christ has become mere lip

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service.

These virgins cannot be individual believers because believers cannot lose their salvation. Believers have *eternal life; and they shall never perish* (John 10:28), but churches, like nations, can apostatize. The foolish virgins are not new to us. They can be seen in the second and third chapters of the book of the Revelation, where the five foolish virgins are characterized by the apostasy of five of the seven churches in Asia. The last of these, as we have seen, is the Laodicean church. It characterizes the age immediately before the first resurrection (Revelation 3:14-19). The lesson to be learned from this parable is that from the first century until the first resurrection, there will be churches which will be faithful to the ministry committed to their trust, and there will be churches which will be unfaithful to that trust.

This brings us to our Lord's second parable, recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money [silver].

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went

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and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money [silver] to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:14-30)

The key to this parable is seen in the servant who took his lord's silver and hid it in the earth. Throughout the Old Testament, and particularly in the worship of the tabernacle in the wilderness, silver represents redemption (Exodus 30:11-16 and 38:25-31). It is unfortunate that the translators translated the word for silver, *money*, because the connection to the redemptive work of Christ is lost in that translation. However when we recognize that our Lord was talking about silver, and silver in the typology of Scripture represents salvation, then the parable becomes plain. There are rewards in heaven for the servant who has been faithful in proclaiming the truth of salvation. However for the servant who has buried the truth of salvation, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The reason for this is obvious. If the servant hid the truth of salvation from others, for whatever reason, it was also hidden to him.

Each servant in this parable refers to Israel. This can be seen in the book of Isaiah, where Jacob is referred to as *my servant* (Isaiah 44:1), and also in Genesis, when Jacob wrestled with the Lord, the Lord changed his name to Israel (Genesis 32:24-28). Thus Jacob my servant is Israel my servant. Therefore this parable is about Israel's service to the Lord, whether she was faithful or unfaithful at different times throughout the fifteen hundred or more years that she was the servant of the Lord.

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It is obvious that over the course of her history, God used Israel in a mighty way. All of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, were written by Jews (Romans 3:1-2). Consequently from the time of their exodus from Egypt until they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, the Jews (Israel) have been the custodians of the truth of the Word of God. In the present age, the church is the custodian of that truth. Thus these first two parables in our Lord's Olivet discourse teach essentially the same truth to two different groups, the church and Israel: both of which have been, or are, the servants of the Lord.

Few in this world seem to understand that our Lord's public ministry was to Jews (Romans 15:8). His sermons before His resurrection from the dead were directed to Jews and not Christians. Thus most of what we read in the Gospels was directed to the Jews and not to the church. In our Lord's ministry, He used the law *lawfully* to bring the Jews to salvation, but the religious leaders among them were so steeped in the traditions of men that they were blind to the truth of salvation. They had not appropriated it to themselves, and they certainly could not convey the truth of salvation to others within the nation of Israel (Matthew 23:13). This can be seen in an event that happened on our Lord's journey to Bethany, six days before the Passover. We did not consider this event in our previous chapter, *The Occasion of the Olivet Discourse*, because, for our purpose, it is more useful to our present discussion.

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And

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Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:1-10)

This meeting with Zacchaeus was prompted by our Lord's omniscience. This was to be the day of his salvation. It was also to be a day that would show forth a negative reaction by the religious leaders in Israel (because of their biases) to the salvation of a sinner. Therefore this event illustrates the truth of our Lord's second parable in His Olivet discourse. The reaction of the religious crowd to our Lord's contact with Zacchaeus (a sinner) illustrates the hardness of their hearts. They were without compassion for this publican. As far as they were concerned, the truth that had been committed to their trust as leaders in Israel was hidden and would remain hidden to Zacchaeus. Nevertheless our Lord said, *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* Thus the apostasy of those leaders could not prevent the elective purpose of God, not in that age nor in any age:

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money [silver], that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou

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wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money [silver] into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. (Luke 19:11-27)

Further light is shed upon the servant who hid his Lord's silver when we consider a statement in our Lord's sermon on the mount: *No man, when he hath lighted a [lamp] covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a [lampstand], that they which enter in may see the light. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have* (Luke 8:16-18, emphasis mine). The words which we have emphasized, *seemeth to have*, describes the servant who hid his Lord's silver, perfectly. He claims to be the servant of the Lord, but he does not know Him. He may *honor him with his lips, but his heart is far from him* (Mark 7:6).

While this parable is about Israel, it matters not if we apply this parable to Israel (as we have done) or to different churches in this age. The lesson is the same. When Israel or the church has hidden the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ from others, *after the commandments and doctrines of men* (Colossians 2:22), they have hidden it from themselves. While this parable is about Israel, the results of apostasy are the same, whether with the Jews at the first advent of our Lord or with the church at the second advent of our Lord, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 25:30).

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The final parable of our Lord will provide its own interpretation if we allow it to do so. However if we press it beyond known Scriptural truth, as many have done, the truth of the parable will break down and all understanding will be lost.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Matthew 25:31-46)

The sheep and the goats in this parable are nations, not individuals. As nations they will be rewarded (at the coming of our Lord) for what they have done *unto one of the least of these my brethren*. The brethren of the Lord compose the nation of Israel. So those who have had compassion upon the nation of Israel will be the sheep, and those who have abused Israel will be the goats. The goat nations *shall go away into everlasting punishment*, but the sheep nations will be rewarded by entrance into the earthly Kingdom of God (during the millennial reign of Christ).

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It must be remembered that the sheep nations are being rewarded for good works. Therefore their reward in the Kingdom is not salvation, because salvation *is not by works of righteousness which we have done* (Titus 3:5). Our Lord spoke of these nations in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, when He said:

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. (Matthew 10:39-42)

Once we understand that the sheep nations are not redeemed people, but nations that have done good unto Israel throughout the *time of Jacob's trouble*, then we can understand who the people are that shall be deceived by the devil at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, when the devil is loosed for a little season (Revelation 20:7-10). Too many expositors have sought to make the sheep nations redeemed people because of the last few words in our Lord's final parable, *but the righteous into eternal life* (Matthew 25:46). These expositors have failed to remember that salvation is not obtained by works of righteousness that anyone has done. They have also failed to remember that the righteous (II Corinthians 5:21) shall enter into eternal life, but the self-righteous will not.

Indeed the sheep nations will enter the realm of eternal life when they enter the Kingdom because they will be in the presence of our Lord and the redeemed, but they will not have eternal life unless their faith and trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as stated above, it is obvious they

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are not redeemed. Otherwise they could not be deceived by the devil when he is loosed for a little season, at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. This little phrase, *but the righteous into eternal life*, is another example of the prophetic principle, things that are written together do not always go together.