

Christ's Return *His Revealing and Manifestation*

"And He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began."- Acts 3:20, 21.

THE little band of believers who had followed the Lord in His service of love and sacrifice during the three and a half years of His earthly ministry, were about to be sorely tried, How great had been their expectations! The mighty power of God had been wonderfully demonstrated in the works of mercy accomplished by the Master, as also by His words of wisdom and grace. There could be no question but that He was the Messiah, and Philip confidently informed Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets did write." "Come and see." Peter also boldly declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." How plaintive was the statement of Cleopas as he and another disciple were joined on the way to Emmaus by the Master disguised as a stranger. After having mentioned the terrible tragedy that had been enacted by the rulers of the people in slaying their Lord, he adds, "but we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel."

We then remember how their hearts burned within them as He, Who spake as never man spake, in words of grace explained to them from Moses and all the prophets, how just what had happened was only fulfilling that "which was written.

That it was necessary before Christ should enter His glory and Kingdom and commence the great work of delivering Israel and all the world from the oppression, not only of Rome, but of Satan and sin and its consequences, that He should first suffer. The first step in regard to the liberation of Israel and the world was to pay the price of sin. The penalty of death was against humanity as a whole. Justice had condemned the race to death on account of one man's transgression. Adam represented the earthly family. It was in mercy that all were included in the transgression, So that in justice all could be included in the redemption wrought by one man Christ Jesus. This is clearly stated in Romans 5:1 1-19, and again in that beautiful chapter on the Resurrection- 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead, for as in Adam all die, So in Christ shall all be made alive."

Unless there could be a resurrection from the dead, then all the glorious promises of Messiah's Kingdom- could avail nothing for the great majority of the human family. Millions of heathens and millions of children have died and never heard of God's great plan for blessing mankind, never heard of the only name whereby they could come to God and have salvation. Had not Christ undertaken to pay the price of sin, the death sentence could never have been lifted, and there could never have been any hope of a life to come, there could never have been any

Resurrection at all. How necessary, then, was the great sacrificial work of our Redeemer at His first advent. The whole matter of His second presence in Kingdom glory, to "bless all the families of the earth" in accordance with the great Abrahamic promise, depended on it.

Not only on the way to Emmaus did the Lord point the disciples forward to the fulfillment of all the glorious prophecies of the Old Testament, but we read Acts 1:3, "To whom also He showed himself after his passion by many infallible proofs being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." They also enquired of Him, "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel."

It had been a matter very much hidden in the scriptures of the Law and the prophets, that Messiah must first suffer, and thus make satisfaction for sin. Peter in his first epistle, chapter 1, tells us that the prophets did not understand their own utterances concerning the sufferings of Christ, but realised that the message was not unto themselves but was intended for those coming later- the church, the spiritual seed of Abraham. It was, then, not surprising that the disciples of our Lord should have such happy expectations regarding His presence. Not understanding the veiled utterances respecting the suffering they were more attracted by the beautiful expressions about the "King that should reign in righteousness." "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order and establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," and "in that day shall there be a root out of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it." "And the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths .. and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "And they shall sit every man under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall make them afraid." (Isaiah 32: 1; 9:7; 11:4- 10; 25:6- 9; and Micah 4:1 - 5.)

I Will Come Again.

Joh 14:3— "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and

receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also."

Nothing, then, can be more plainly stated than that our Lord Jesus is to come again and accomplish a great work for which the first advent was but the necessary preparation. The hope of Christ's return and kingdom has ever been the great stimulus to the Church in all her trials and sufferings.

The Gospel Age is the Age of faith, not that faith is a characteristic of mankind during this time, but that God is dealing only with such as have faith, and that faith in Christ's death is the means of justification and acceptance with God, in contrast with the Law Dispensation when perfect works were required, and also contrasting with the next Age, when under the New Covenant every man will be judged according to his works. ('Re 20:12, 13.) During this Age of Faith, God is selecting a certain class which will, when the Christ character has been formed in each, become the Bride of Christ, and "will sit down in his throne even as he overcame and is set down with the Father in his throne." (Revelation 3:21.)

In one sense the Lord has ever been with His people according to His promise, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." In the same way He is represented in Revelation as "walking amidst the candlesticks". This was evidently the thought indicated by His words, I will not leave you comfortless, I will visit you, the Father and he will send you another comforter even the spirit of the truth." (John 14:16- 18.)

He would be with the Church in all her suffering. No member would be without His sympathy and gracious aid His advocacy with the Father, and comfort of the holy spirit. Yet He is represented as being retained in the heavens "until the times of restitution of all things."

At His first advent He came to His own, the Jewish people, who represented God's Kingdom in the earth; He offered Himself as their King and was rejected. "His own received him not." They then failed to secure the privilege of becoming solely the Church class; the Kingdom of Heaven class. "The Law and the prophets were until John, since then the Kingdom of Heaven is preached." (Luke 16:16.) They rejected the "chief corner stone." They were the wicked husbandmen who slew the Son and Heir. Therefore, Jesus said "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matthew 21:33- 43.)

Peter refers to the rejection of the chief corner stone, and speaks of the Church, which is being selected from all nations, as being the nation of God. "Which before were not a people but are now the people of God." (1 Peter 2:6- 10.)

Not until this Church class is complete will the Jews as a nation see that they crucified the Lord of Glory. Not until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in- the number of God's elect completed - will blindness be

removed from Israel, and they shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matthew 23:39; Romans 11:25, 27.)

James So concisely summarizes the matter in Acts 15:14-17, "God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out a people for his name, and to this agree the words of the prophets as it is written, After this I will return and build again the Tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men might seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

This, too, is in accord with the Apostle's statement in Romans 8:19- 22. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now; waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

In other words, waiting until the Church is complete and shines forth "as the sun in the Kingdom," for the blessing of all the willing and obedient of mankind, "All the families of the earth."

The first and second advents are then closely related in that the purpose of the second coming could not be undertaken until the justice of God's throne had been met by the payment of the penalty for sin to redeem mankind.

It will be readily seen how necessary it was that our Saviour should become a man- not a sinful man, though born of a woman yet not of Adamic stock, but separate from sin, spotless, undefiled in order that He might offer Himself as a perfect man, in the place of Adam, and thus allow the sinner to go free. "He gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time," So that "as all in Adam die, So all in Christ might be made alive again."

Thus it was that Christ came in the body of humiliation for the suffering of death, but the object at the second advent is So very different that He will not again appear in the flesh, of which He said, "My flesh I give for the life of the world," but we look for Him the second time "in power and great glory," "in the express image of the Father's person. He was "put to death flesh, but raised spirit," and comes to take control of earth, to bind Satan, the present "prince of this world," and to reign in his stead, - to stamp out evil and ultimately all evil doers, to bring in righteousness . and peace, and make this earth a paradise, filled with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord.

The Apostle in Hebrews 9:14- 28 uses the typical high priest and the two sacrifices of atonement as illustrative of the first and second comings of Christ. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and appeared in the presence of God for us. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin (without a sin offering) unto salvation. That will be, as in the type, where all Israel awaited the appearing of the High Priest, coming out of the Holy the second time; when Moses and Aaron then lifted up

their hands and blessed the people." (Leviticus 9:22, 23.) After the great time of trouble has swept over the earth, the people will have learned the sad lesson that no human government is capable of ruling in righteousness, nor able to bring peace and order in the earth. The desire of all nations will be the kingdom, which Christ will establish. Just as Israel awaited the second appearance of the High Priest Aaron who came forth and blessed them, So mankind is spoken of by Paul (Romans 8:19-22) as the whole creation, groaning and travailing together in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God- the Church- the joint heirs with Christ in His Kingdom- who are to sit with Him in His throne. (Revelation 3:21.)

He Comes To Reign.

At the second coming of Christ, then, there will be a great change of government. Satan and the fallen angels will be bound, they who have so long been ruling in the hearts of the disobedient, and enticing into sin and wickedness, deceiving millions in the many false religions and thousands in such cults as Theosophy, Christian Science and Spiritism, through witches and mediums. Instead of all this baneful influence there will be a new and happy influence towards righteousness, godliness, kindness and peace; because Christ and His saints will have taken control of the world, and the purpose is

to raise the fallen, lift up the oppressed, relieve the afflicted, and encourage all to walk up the highway of holiness, and to gain the reward of eternal life.

When we see that the purpose of Christ's return and kingdom is so very different from that of His first advent, we can see that He will not need to come again in a body of humiliation, but as He Himself has said, "In power and great glory, and all the holy angels with him." He has no need to again change His nature and become flesh. His mighty work can the better be accomplished in His power and might, as the glorious spirit being; "in the express image of the Father's person. (Hebrews 1:3, 4.)

Let us enquire as to what will be the first work of our Lord on His return. Will He at once begin His millennial reign, or is there not some preparatory work to be done?

Parable Of The Young Nobleman.

Perhaps the Parable of the Young Nobleman in Luke 19:11- 27 will be helpful to consider at this point. The reason stated for this parable being given is, "Because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear, and Because they were nigh to Jerusalem. They were looking for a literal, human king and earthly kingdom, with Jerusalem as the capital of all the earth.

Our Lord had already informed them that the Kingdom (Luke 17:20)

cometh not with outward show or with observation. His hearers were but naturally minded men. The holy spirit had not yet been given, and So they could not think of anything but an earthly Messiah, with an earthly throne and earthly armies going forth to conquer and thus establish His Kingdom in all the earth. How differently does the matter appear when we receive the spiritual mind, and compare scripture with scripture, for though Jerusalem is again to be restored, and Israel according to the flesh is to return to God's favour, and will be the earthly representative of the Messianic Kingdom, yet the real kingdom class, Christ and His saints, His joint- heirs, will be spiritual. They will have much more power and control of earths affairs as spiritual beings than could be the case if they were in human form.

This parable of the young nobleman was given to help those who had ears to hear, to realise that there was much to be done before their expectations of seeing Jerusalem again a joy in the earth could be accomplished. Our Lord was represented by the young nobleman.

He would need to be absent for some time (the whole Gospel Age). He would then return with full authority to set up the Kingdom. It also shows that even on His return He will first deal with His servants. The ten servants were each given a pound with which to trade, and on His return the Lord first requires of these an account. The pound appears to refer to justification, which comes to every Christian believer, and by putting this to the banker, or, in other words, by presenting our justified selves as living sacrifices to God, we receive the begettal of God's holy spirit, and thereby start in the Christian race, and endeavour to produce the fruits of the holy spirit.

There appear to be four classes here dealt with by the Lord.

(1) The one who had gained ten pounds would appear to represent those who had faithfully used their privileges and opportunities, and had developed the perfect character, the likeness of Christ, and So received the abundant entrance into the Kingdom, "Have thou authority over ten cities."

(2) The one who gained only five pounds may represent the great multitude who seem to gain a second prize and serve before the throne. (Revelation 7:9.)

(3) The one who did no trading but simply handed back the pound would seem to be those who came So far as to see the justification by faith through the precious blood of Christ, but they do not go on to consecration, they did not go to the bank with their pound at all. They have never taken the step of offering their purchased lives to God. They are those "who seek to save their lives and So lose them." They are those who "- 'receive the grace of God in vain." The pound is taken from them; they are not punished otherwise and will no doubt be judged with the world in the next Age.

(4) There are those who were rebellious and willfully rejected the Lord's provision for them, and turned against the King. "We will not have this man to rule over us." These were slain, and would probably represent those who sin the sin unto death.

All this work or judgment among Christians is shown to be at the return of Christ to take the Kingdom, yet prior to His taking control of earth. So there would be some time during which Christ would be present among His people, yet unknown to the world.

IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE. Luke 12:35- 48.

"Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and be ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately."

THE thought appears to be that the Lord would be present and knocking, and that some

might not be sufficiently alert to hear the "knock," while those who were in the right attitude and waiting for Him would more quickly recognise the Lord's presence. Then there is the promise of verse 37, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily, I say unto you, he will gird himself and make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them."

This is surely a wonderful promise, and also clearly indicates that the Lord will be present among His people prior to His taking control of earth's affairs, Not only will the world be unaware of His presence, but many of His own people will evidently be too much taken up with other things, soothed to spiritual drowsiness by worldly attractions, or social matters, or even social uplift, temperance or religious work, and thus fail to recognise His presence, and fail to enter the marriage feast, fail to sit down at the table to eat the meat specially provided by the Lord for the watchers. We find similar language in Revelation 3:20, addressed to the Laodicean Church: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, to him and will sup with him, and he with me."

Verse 45 seems clearly to indicate a class which will refuse to believe that the Lord is present, and who will begin to smite those who are rejoicing in the fact, and are enjoying the feast which the Lord promised to prepare, a feast of truths, new and old, out of the storehouse the Word of God. So that here, again, we notice the solemn fact that the first work at the Lord's return is a separating work among professing Christians, "Judgment must begin at the House of God."

This separating work is termed the "harvest," and the Lord gave the Parable of the Tares sown in the wheat field to illustrate the matter. (Matthew 13:24- 30.)

This parable covers the whole Gospel Age. The "good seed" is the Word of God, the true Gospel of grace in Christ. The enemy that sowed the tares is the Devil, who has sought to becloud the truth and to pervert it by presenting error, right from the beginning. His crafty work is seen in all the false religions of heathendom, as well as in Christendom. The great anti-Christian Roman Catholic Church is surely his masterpiece—so wonderful a counterfeit of the true Church that millions have been deceived. The tares, sown among the wheat, have developed so that the wheat field has become a tare field. The terrible falling into error and development of tares could be seen even in the Apostles' days, but to the enquiry as to whether the tares should be separated or pulled up the reply is: No, do not do any separating work until the Harvest time—"the Harvest is the end of the Age." Then the Lord would be present to direct the work, and would have the tares bound in bundles for the burning. Thus the wheat would be separated from these bundles and gathered out of the field into the barn.

This is all to be accomplished by the present Lord, in preparation for the setting up of the Kingdom. The Kingdom will not commence its thousand years' reign of glory and blessing until the wheat is all garnered- that is, until the Church, the members in Christ, are all gathered home to reign with Him. The reign will not begin until the tares have gone into the fire, nor until Satan, the present prince, is dethroned and bound.

The question now is as to just where are we in regard to these important matters?

"Watchman, tell me does the morning Of fair Zion's glory dawn? Have the signs that mark its coming Yet upon thy pathway shone. Pilgrim, yes; arise, look round thee' Light is breaking in the skies; Gird thy Bridal robes around thee, Morning dawns, arise, arise!"

While we have the prophecies of Daniel, the 1260, 1290, 1335 and the 2300 days, pointing to the years 1798, 1828, 1874 and 1846 respectively, yet none of these prophecies just clearly state that the Lord would be present again. They speak of the ending of Papal power and the cleansing of the sanctuary, and "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the end of the 1335 days." The Lord has left us rather to judge by the signs, the conditions about us, and the work going on among Christians, as to where we are in respect of His coming. The matter then may be discerned by those who search, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," and as for those who neglect the Word of God, neglect to watch, and do not trim their lamps- the Word of God which is a lamp to our feet, a guide to our pathway- they will surely be left in ignorance of these important developments in connection with the Lord's presence and the deliverance of the Church.

The Lord has stated that when the Son of Man returns there will be similar conditions to those which existed in Noah's day, prior to the

Flood. There were about 120 years during which Noah preached and warned of the coming catastrophe- the deluge- and during which time the people scoffed and went their own way eating drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came. (Luke 17:26- 27.)

"As it was in the days of Noah, So shall it be in the days of the Son of Man, they did eat, they drank, they married wives, and they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." "Likewise also 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 days of the Son of Man." (Luke:17:27- 30.)

St. Paul also speaks of the same time, saying, "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high- minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (2 Timothy 3:1- 5.)

The Lord, after speaking of the signs of His presence, warns against the possibility of that day coming upon us unawares. "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and So that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand of Man." (Luke 21:34- 36.)

The Ten Virgins Parable.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins indicates that there will be two classes even among those interested in the Lord's return. Some have trimmed their lamps and have oil in their vessels, and are thus able to appreciate the presence of Christ, while others seem to lack the spiritual perception through lack of oil in their vessels, the holy spirit in their hearts, and So fail to enter the Bridal Chamber, and are not recognized by the Bridegroom.

It would seem probable that the outworking of this Parable of the Ten Virgins has been in course of fulfillment ever since the ending of Daniel's 1290 days. It was somewhere about 1825 that the advent movement had its beginning, and the message went throughout Christendom, "Prepare to meet the Bridegroom."

Mr. Miller and others prominent in this movement had concluded that Christ would return about 1844, which they understood was the end of Daniel's 2300 days (years). (Daniel 8:14.)

A great disappointment occurred at that time, for those whose minds were exercised on the subject had not grasped the correct thought of the manner of the Lord's return. They looked for Him to appear again in human form, visible to the human eye. They had not noticed the intent of the Lord's own words (Luke 17:20- 24.) , " The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation," before the Son

Neither shall they say, "Lo here, or to there! For behold the Kingdom of God is (or will be) among you." Even this disappointment of 1844 seemed to be intimated in the Word,"—"And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it; and they shall say to you: see here or see there, go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out of one part under heaven and shineth unto the other . part under heaven (the sunshine out of the east unto the west), So shall also the Son of Man be in his day." It is quite evidently a mistake to think of this lightening as the lightning flash. It is foolish to think that the Lord's second presence would be but a flash as of lightning. He is represented elsewhere as the "Sun of righteousness that shall arise with healing in His wings." (Malachi 4:2).

That surely means that He will not be seen by the natural eye, though every eye of faith will see Him, and appreciate the light of the knowledge of the Lord, which shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the sea, and feel the warmth of His love and the healing influences of those rays of sunshine from His glorious presence. We may recall the incident of Paul's conversion, and how the Lord appeared to him in the way, and His appearance was above the brightness of the sun at noonday, and could not be looked upon. Paul was blinded. Then, too, we remember how highly the Lord was exalted after His resurrection. Paul declares that he saw Christ "as one born (in resurrection) before the time." He saw Him as He will be when He comes as a glorious spirit being, in the "express image of the Father's person" "whom no man hath seen nor can see."

There is not one word in connection with the Lord's coming again to indicate that He would once more change His nature and again become flesh, but on the contrary, He declared (Matthew 24:30) , " There 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." And again (Luke 9:26), "He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." And Matthew 16:27, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father and with His angels." It would be but reasonable that, if the Son of Man should return in human form visible to men, the angels also would be in similar form, and thus also be seen of men. We remember again that it was in order that Christ might pay the price of sin by giving "His flesh (His humanity) for the life of the world," that He had become flesh, that He had been "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, that He might, by the grace of God taste death

for every man." (Hebrews 2:9.) Having accomplished the great sacrifice, He comes again, not in the body of humiliation, but in power and glory, in the "express image of the Father's person."

The apostle John did not even know what He would be like, but he knew that He would come "as He is." He would not change His condition or nature, but those who will see Him must be changed to be like Him. (1 John 3:2.)

There are scriptures which, if taken literally, might appear to teach to the contrary of the Master's words, "Henceforth the world seeth me no more." but if we patiently examine these passages we believe it will be seen that they are figurative or symbolic, and when their real meaning is discerned they will be found beautifully harmonizing with the plain statement of our Lord, and with the Apostle Paul who said, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we Him (so) no more."

We have, for instance, the statement that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night; and yet again we read that He will descend with a "shout." and the "voice of the Archangel" and the "trump of God." All these take place at the presence of the Lord, yet only those who are earnestly waiting, watching and listening will hear the shout, the voice, the trump or the "knock." Others shall be unaware of His having come. Revelation 3:3 (Diaglott). "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard and observed it, and reform. If therefore thou shouldst not watch, I may have come as a thief, and thou mayst by no means know at what hour I may have come on thee." All these symbols refer to the message of truth, a proclamation of His presence, etc.

Da 12:1 shows that the Lord would be present, "shall stand up" prior to the "Time of Trouble," Revelation 11:15- 18 shows that the nations will be angry, and like those in Noah's day, unaware of the presence. 1 Thes. 4:16 shows, too, that Christ will be present when the shout, voice and trump sound forth, and Matthew 24:31 tells the purpose of the sounding of the trumpet to be the accomplishing of the harvest work, to "gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven." That is, the gathering of the saints out of all the bundles of error and sectarianism, into the light and liberty of the truth as it is in Jesus.

We still have for further consideration the Lord's parables, "The Tares" and the "Ten Virgins," as indicating the work of gathering the saints out of all the systems of error during the second presence of Christ; and it will be noticed that in neither parable does the separation begin before the Lord has come.

All ten virgins were pure ones, they were Christians, they were interested in the Lord's return, they had all gone out to meet Him. That does not mean that they had gone to any particular place to meet the Lord, but they had their minds exercised in the study of the Bible: they were watching. They, no doubt, represent those who in Miller's day and since,

have been "looking for His coming." There are two classes mentioned, wise and foolish, and evidently such trials or tests which the Lord permitted, through the misunderstanding of truth in 1844, and many others since that time, are for the very purpose of separating the wise from the foolish. Some get discouraged through these tests, and lose heart and become drowsy, and some seem also to have excitable dreams, and are led away by vain fancies and imaginations. What light they started out with flickers and dies, and they have no oil in their vessels, they are short of the holy spirit in their hearts to "guide them into all truth, and teach them things to come." Ultimately they appear to secure oil for their lamps, but too late to enter the marriage chamber. The door had been closed, the elect had been completed, the Bride had made herself ready and entered the joys of her Lord.

It is not for us to try and discern to which class anyone may belong, but it is the part of wisdom for us each to examine our hearts and see that we have "oil in our vessels." We may gain a good deal of intellectual knowledge and discern something of the trend of events so that we may be expectant, even go out to meet the Bridegroom, and yet be sadly short of the holy spirit. It is not sufficient that we have been begotten of the spirit; we are leaky vessels, and need continual refilling.

This is the principal work we have to do; without it we shall be failures. If we have the holy spirit in our hearts, the Word of God, being prayerfully studied, will surely shine clearer and clearer, and reveal the presence of the Bridegroom. Not only so, but the fruits of God's holy spirit in our hearts will be manifest in our lives, in love, joy, peace long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Galatians 5:22- 23.) Or as Peter (2 Peter 1:5-11) puts it, "Add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love If ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Why He Knocketh.

"When he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately."- Luke 12:36.

From the Parable of the Young Nobleman, also that of the Wedding Garment (Matt. 22) , and from Luke 12:37- 48 and other Scriptures, it would appear to be manifest that the Lord would be present, judging among His people and otherwise preparing for the establishment of His Kingdom, while yet unknown to the world. He would bring to a conclusion the work of the Gospel Age, separating the "wheat from the tares," and finally gathering the perfect body of Christ, the full number of His elect, the fact of His presence being known only to those watching and listening for His 'knock." It is to such that He has promised to "gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

This feast is a spiritual one, and indicates that the Lord "will bring forth things new and old" out of the storehouse. And the promise is that those watchers who are themselves refreshed by the truths specially revealed by the Lord when He has returned, are to be engaged in the service of providing these "things new and old" out of the storehouse, to all who are faithfully watching, to such as have ears to hear. And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find So doing. Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." - Luke 12:42- 44.

This spiritual feast ears to be what was indicated by the 1335 days Daniel- "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the 1335 days." - Daniel 12:12.

In this 12th chapter of Daniel, three periods are particularly mentioned- 1260 days (time, times and a half). 1290 days, and 1335- which are to be counted from the setting up of the desolating abomination, and the taking away of the continual sacrifice. This event would appear to be about 539 A.D., when both items mentioned in Daniel 12:11 became facts. Papacy assumed civil control, and the mass was instituted, as though the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, offered "once for all," was not completely satisfactory and all availing. These three periods appear to terminate respectively 1795- 99, 1825- 29 and 1874. The 1260 days or years reaching to 1795- 1799 marked the time when the Papal power, which had so long trodden down the saints of the Most High, was broken, and the Pope was taken prisoner by Napoleon and carried to France. Thus the saints of God were relieved from Papal persecutions. With the greater liberty, the truth of God's Word began to shine, Bible Societies sprang into existence, and the work of cleansing the sanctuary went forward. The great Reformation under Zwingli, Ecolampadius, Melancthon and Luther had started the cleansing by rebuking the abuses and errors of Rome. Wesley had followed in preaching faith- and true holiness. Sanctification was his chief theme. By 1825 there was the Campbellite or Church of Christ movement, also the Millerite movement, which awakened the Christian world' to great expectations regarding the Lord's return./ C' A clear understanding of the doctrine of the ransom seems to have been attained, and a class has ever since 1846 been separated from the nominal churches.

It would seem to be about 1825- 29 that the preaching respecting the Lord's return drew together those who "loved His appearing." It was as though in the Parable of the Ten Virgins there had the commencement of its fulfilment, as already stated.

Ever since that time God's watching people have been permitted to have experiences which have proved and tested their faith, and evidently divided class from class. The great "shout" or proclamation which was promised has been accomplishing its purpose, and calling out those who "have ears to hear" to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Then even

among those who are represented as ten virgins there have been experiences which have no doubt been the means of demonstrating to which class each watcher belongs, the "five wise" or the "five foolish" virgins. The whole ten virgins represent Christians- pure ones- justified, cleansed by the precious blood of Christ. Not only are all Christians, but all are interested in the Lord's return, They desire to meet Him and have some knowledge about His coming, yet there is a difference among them; five are wise, having not only a knowledge of God's Word, "the lamp to our feet," but they have a good supply of oil in their hearts and minds; these could readily adjust their minds and hearts to an appreciation of events and recognize the "signs of His presence," and So enter into the joys of the near approach of the Kingdom and enjoy the feast which the Lord had promised to prepare for those whom He would find faithfully watching.

The five foolish lack the supply of oil in their vessels, are short of the holy spirit in their hearts, and, therefore, have not the appreciation of events or a Scriptural understanding of the signs of the Lord's presence, and, therefore, fail to enter into the feast. The first test of the Harvest time soon came. Mr. Miller had predicted the second presence in 1844, and expected the Lord to come with "outward show" and to be seen by all. It was evidently expected that our Lord would appear with a human body instead of as He had said, "the Son of Man cometh not with outward show," but "in power and great glory, and all the holy angels with Him." They had overlooked the fact that Jesus was "put to death flesh, but quickened spirit," that "flesh and blood (human nature) cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," that "though we have known Christ (says the Apostle) after the flesh, henceforth know we Him no more," and that even the apostle John was ignorant of what our Lord was like in the glorified condition. "We know not what we shall be like, but we know that, when he shall appear we shall be like him, and see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.) So the Christians of this Millerite movement suffered a great disappointment, which began the operation under the Lord's providence of separating the two classes of virgins. This was the commencement of the Harvest work, beginning first among the Lord's own consecrated people.

THERE were evidently similar testings in our Lord's earthly sojourn, which was during the Harvest time of the Jewish Age. It was the message that a new Age was about to open, and that Messiah has come, which at once separated the "Israelites indeed" from the nominal system. Then, as our Lord began to speak of the way of the Cross, of taking up the Cross and denying oneself, some withdrew; and when He talked of giving His flesh for the life of the world, it caused a stumbling to some. Then a question arose about whether Christ could come out of Galilee. "Hath not the Scriptures said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was, and So there was a division among the people because of him." (John 7:41- 43.) "Some said, He is a good man, and others nay, but he deceiveth the people." (John 7:12.)

On another occasion when He spoke about "Whoso eateth My flesh and

drinketh My blood bath eternal life," etc., we read that many therefore of His disciples when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it." And "from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him," (John 6:61- 66.)

Thus it was that there were such truths sent out and such conditions permitted as would separate the wheat from the chaff. While the wheat was gathered into the Gospel Garner, the chaff was tied more tightly, in sectarian bundles, ready to be burned at the conclusion of the Harvest time, in the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 70.

In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24- 30) the Lord indicated that there would be a similar Harvest time at the end of this , Gospel Age. He says, "Let both grow together until the harvest" (elsewhere He explains "the harvest is the end of the Age"). "And in time of harvest I will say to the reapers; Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.."

Present Day Harvest Experiences.

Ever 'since the Millerite movement there have been just such experiences and proclamations of truths which have separated those who "have ears to hear" any news of the Bridegroom's coming, and who "love his appearing and kingdom." Strong truths have been permitted to come to God's people, and discussions and disputings have done their work. Sometimes it has been trivial personalities which have led astray. Sometimes differences on matter of order, or on truths which are not vital have turned some away, and what light they possessed has become darkened and their spirit has become bitter and, finally, they have seemed to lose the faith and hope, and the light that was in them has become darkness. Very generally the difference of thought is not so much the cause of separations as the wrong spirit that is engendered in the discussions. Thus the lack of oil in the vessel is indicated. Sometimes it may be that more important truths have caused divisions, and sometimes error has been made to look like truth. "Light has been put for darkness, and darkness for light.'

The Lord foretold that there would be such delusions and sections, saying, "Many false prophets (teachers) shall arise and deceive many" (Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, and 24) ." In So much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." The whole matter depends upon our having "oil in the vessels," i.e., the holy spirit in our hearts and earnestly seeking the guidance of God's Word, which is the lamp to our feet.

We would note that all this Harvest work is to take place after the Lord of the Harvest has arrived and also before the last phase of the great time of trouble, when "The fire of the Lord's jealousy shall devour the whole earth" (Zephaniah 3:8- 9), in which the bundles of tares are to be destroyed. The indication also is that, prior to this final burning up, the "elect" shall have been gathered Home to be with the Lord in the heavens.

Another parable found in Matthew 22:1- 14 seems to take in the whole Gospel Age from the time the Gospel feast was prepared. John introduced the Bridegroom (John 3:29) , who had come to purchase His bride. The feast was spread, the fatlings, the antitype of the bullock (Lev. 16) and other types were slain; then the feast was ready.

The invitation was first to the leaders of Israel; few came, then the invitation was extended finally to all nations. Then the King comes in, the Lord returns, and the first thing He does is to inspect the guests. All who have entered the guest chamber have accepted the wedding garment, and therefore the Lord's query, "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" This denotes that some even after being justified by faith and entering the Christian way, would, through one cause or another, lose faith, and trust in their own "filthy rags" as righteousness. They become agnostics, and are cast out of the Gospel favour and go into outer darkness.

Thus it would appear that the Scriptures indicate a progressiveness respecting the second advent of Christ. There is first the winding up of the work of the Gospel Age, preparatory to the opening up of the Kingdom Age. The Church must be all complete, the dead in Christ shall rise first, then those that remain are to complete their course and be caught away at the moment of death, to be with the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17.) The present "prince of the power of the air" will be dethroned and bound, along with all his evil spirits, the wicked angels who have been operating in Spiritism. Spiritism will not be able to operate when the Kingdom of Christ is established.

So long as Satan's power in the earth abounds, So long as evil spirits will have been operating with him since Noah's day can deceive humanity by impersonating departed friends, through mediums, called witches in olden days, in the seances and by other means in Christendom, and by medicine men, Devil priests, etc., in heathen lands, we may know that Christ's kingdom has not been grieved by the "cessation of these evil practices" by the "angels that left their own habitation" (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4), will be one of the first evidences that Christ has taken to Himself His great power and commenced His reign on the earth.

The Bible teaching respecting the second presence of Christ and the work which He will first perform at His return has been somewhat hidden through a poor translation of the Greek word "parousia" in the New Testament.

The Word Parousia

The word occurs in the following texts, and in each case it should be properly translated "presence," not "coming":

Mt 24:3- "What shall be the sign of thy 'presence?'" "

Mt 24:27, 37, 39- "So shall also the 'presence' of the Son of Man be."

1Co 15:23- "They that are Christ's at his 'presence.' "

1Th 2:19- "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, presented before our Lord Jesus Christ at his 'presence'."

1Th 3:13- "That He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father at the 'presence' of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1Th 4:15- "We which are alive and remain unto the 'presence' of the Lord, shall not precede them which are asleep."

1Th 5:23- "Be preserved blameless unto the 'presence' of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2Th 2:1- "Now we beseech you, brethren, by (respecting) the 'presence' of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering unto him."

2Th 2:8 (see Rev. Ver.)- "Then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation (epiphania) of his 'Presence'."

Jas 5:7- "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the 'presence' of the Lord."

Jas 5:8- "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts for the 'presence' of the Lord draweth nigh."

2Pe 3:3, 4- "There shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His 'presence'?"

The word "parousia" is twice properly translated "presence" in 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 2:12. These two instances clearly demonstrate that the word "parousia" has the same meaning as is correctly translated by our English word "presence." Some have suggested that "parousia" means "arrival" or "drawing near," but how absurd it would be to say that Paul's "bodily arrival is weak" or to say "beloved as ye have always obeyed, not as at my arrival only but now much more in my absence."

It should be evident to any unbiassed mind that the general meaning of the word is presence, and when so translated we find there is a harmony and clearness in the New Testament teaching concerning the Lord's second presence.

Epiphania.

Another Greek word used in connection with our Lord's second presence is "epiphania," which signifies "brightness" or "manifestation." It is rendered "appearing" and "brightness" as in the following instances:- 1 Timothy 6:14 "keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable until

the 'appearing' of our Lord."

2Ti 4:1- "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His 'appearing' and Kingdom."

2Ti 4:8- "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his 'appearing'."

Ti 2:13- "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious 'appearing' of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

2Th 2:8- "Then shall the wicked one be exposed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the 'brightness' (epiphania or bright shining) of his presence. "

Apokalupsis.

The Greek words apokalupsis and apokalupto, which are also used in respect of the coming of the Lord, signify uncovering or unveiling (as of something previously present but hidden). Apokalupsis is rendered "revealed," "revelation," "appearing," "coming" and "manifestation" in the following texts which refer to the Lord's second presence, power and glory, as these shall be made known uncovered or revealed to the world.

2Th 1:7, 8- "The Lord Jesus shall be 'revealed' from heaven. ..."

Ro 8:19—"for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the 'manifestation' of the sons of God."

Lu 17:29- 30- "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is 'revealed'." That is to say, that as soon as the Church has all been taken to be with the Lord, the Son of Man will be revealed to the world in the fiery time of trouble, as the Judge of mankind, who had already been present for some time dealing with His Church, sealing and gathering His elect from the four corners of the earth.

Other texts where this word occurs are:- Romans 8:18 ; 1 Peter 4:13 ; 1 Peter 1:4, 5 ; 1 Corinthians 3:13 ; 1 Corinthians 1:7; (trans, "coming") ; 1 Peter 1:7; and 1 Peter 1:13. "Hope to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the 'revelation' of Jesus Christ."

Thus it seems that the Lord first comes as a thief, and is unknown to the world or even to most Christians. He makes His presence gradually known to the watchers, and those hear His "knock." Gradually His presence is more and more revealed, and finally there will be the manifestation, the demonstration of His presence in the fiery judgment, in which the present world systems, religious, social and political, will be consumed in preparation for the bringing in of the better day of righteousness and peace under the Kingdom for which we have so long prayed, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in

heaven."

THERE are some Scriptures which are used to teach contrary to what has been stated in these pages, but which we believe will be found to be in harmony therewith when carefully examined. For instance, Acts 1:11, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall So come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:18) informs us plainly that our Lord was "put to death flesh, but quickened spirit," which is in harmony with Paul's statement- "sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body." So then, our Lord at His ascension was no longer human, but spirit, and after His ascension was exalted to the Divine nature "in the express image of the Father." He had, on a few occasions after His resurrection assumed the human form So as to be seen by and to converse with the disciples, who were to be witnesses of the fact of His resurrection.

Ac 1:9 reads, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight." The eleventh verse does not promise that anyone will see our Lord return; it simply says that He will come again in like manner as He went. The cloud that received Him, then, may symbolize the same thing that the Lord indicated when He said, "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30.) That is, that clouds in symbolic scriptural language, indicate trouble, distress or calamities, and Daniel informs us (Daniel 12:1) that when Michael (Christ) stands up, there is to be the greatest time of trouble ever experienced. The evangelist Luke, quoting the same words as Matthew 24:30, adds, Luke 21:27, 28, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption- (or deliverance) draweth nigh."

f it were, as some think, that our Lord will suddenly appear sitting on a cloud, there would be no waiting for the deliverance soon to be, for, according to their understanding, they would be instantly caught away to be with the Lord. The meaning seems clearly to be that the clouds of trouble encircle the earth, and the watchers are able to discern, in the severe experiences of the world, that it is the sign "of the presence of the Son of man," who has come and has taken control of the world. He will command "Peace, be still" (Psalm 46) and then cause "righteousness and truth to spring out of the earth." Mankind shall ultimately discern the Son of Man in the clouds in the same way that we can discern Satan in all the wickedness now in the world and in all the false religions of our day.

It is in this way that ultimately "every eye shall see (discern) him."
(Revelation 1:7.)

Earth's New Ruler.

Satan has long been "The prince of this world," "The prince of the power of the air," "The god of this world who now worketh in the children of disobedience." (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2.) He has been permitted

thus to reign and bring experiences to mankind So that they may learn what it, is to be disobedient to God's laws. Christ comes , to bind Satan, and to take the Kingdom instead. He will deliver mankind from bondage to Satan, sin and death. As no one sees Satan, who is a spiritual being, So the world will not see the new Ruler, who has distinctly said, "The world seeth me no more." (John 14:19.) The Church will, see Him, for they are to be changed to be "like , Him," spirit beings. It is when we see matters in this light that the Scriptures become So much clearer and truths respecting our Lord's second presence open up.

In the 24th of Matthew we have in symbolic language a history of the Gospel Age, terminating with the second presence of Christ. The same history, with more detail, is given in the Book of Revelation, also in symbols. The disciples, being impressed by the Lord's doings and sayings respecting the Temple a few days before His death asked Him, Matt. 24.3, "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy presence (Greek, parousia) and of the end of the world (Age)."

Verses 4- 14 seem to be a brief synopsis of the Gospel Age, from that time down to the end. It is an outline of prophecy which has been very clearly fulfilled, as history reveals. What deceptions there have been in connection with the Christian religion. What great claims have been made to great authority, even to being Christ. What wars and- unrest, what famines, pestilences, scourges, and the people of God have been martyred and tortured. Nation has risen against nation.

Verse 14: "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The Gospel is the good news of Christ's Kingdom for the blessing of all the families of the earth. It has now been preached in every land, to every nation and almost every dialect, So that we are surely living in the "time of the end."

Verses 15- 22 appear to be So worded that they answer that portion of the question relating to the typical temple and Jerusalem and gave instructions to such as had "ears to hear," which saved many lives when the city was taken by Titus' army. Josephus points out that. The fall of the city seemed imminent about AD. 68, but for some reason the Roman Army was recalled, and So Christians made good their escape. Only two years later the city fell amidst the greatest slaughter that had ever been up to that time. That, however, was only a partial fulfillment of the prophecy which is to be fulfilled on a larger scale at the end of this Age, in the destruction of the great systems of Christendom.

Verses 23- 27 speak of the presence of Christ, and show that He will not appear again as a man, that they could say "He is in the desert," or that He is in some secret room. If anyone should tell us that He is here or there, that He can be located anywhere, then we are not to believe them. The presence will be everywhere, just like the sunshine that comes from the east unto the west. The word "lightning," used in the Authorized Version, allows of a wrong thought, and has misled many to think that

the Lord will come like "lightning, which stays not for a moment. The Greek word means "bright shining," and is so translated in Luke 11:36. It is used in Revelation for lightnings, but it undoubtedly here refers to the "bright shining" of the Sun of Righteousness. It is a beautiful illustration of the presence of Christ. Those awake and watching may see the glories of the rising sun for some time, even before it rises above the horizon. How it dispels the gloom and darkness, just as the Sun of Righteousness arising will disperse the dark night of sin and sorrow, of superstition and error, and bring healing in its wings. (Malachi 4:2.)

Thus the Lord would guard us from the many deceptions which were to be, and undoubtedly are, prevalent in this our day. The question of the disciples was: "What shall be the sign of Thy 'parousia,' presence?" - not a sign of His arrival and departure, like the lightning. The Lord adds, "So shall the presence of the Son of man be." Lightning has no presence: it is simply a flash and gone.

Verse 28 indicates that there is to be a feast, just as eagles or carrions feed upon flesh; So those who hunger and thirst after righteousness and truth will be found where the food is (see also Luke 12:37; Revelation 3:20).

Verses 29- 31 seem to refer to the tribulation of God's people during the dark days of Papal persecution and martyrdom foretold by Daniel 7:25.

This great desolating power received its deadly wound by Napoleon. Its power to "tread down the saints" was broken in 1799. There have been the literal demonstrations, in the literal heavens in the notable dark days of 19th May, 1780 (sun darkened), and in the wonderful showers of falling stars of 13th November, 1833, as though to draw attention to the more important fulfillment of this prophecy in the fact that the Gospel light has been darkened by false teachings, such as Evolution, Higher Criticism, etc., and that the clear shining of the writings of the apostles, the twelve stars, has been beclouded by destructive heresies. Then the powers of the heavens (the religious systems) shall be shaken. There has been a general disintegrating process at work throughout Christendom. When we see such processes at work, we may take that as a sign of His presence. This is in line with our Lord's parable, "Let both (wheat and tares) grow together until the harvest" (the end of the Age), when He would send His messengers to gather the tares in bundles to burn them, and to garner the wheat. The trumpet would refer to the proclamation of truth by which the separation would take place. Then will come the great time of trouble. "all the tribes of earth shall mourn."

Verses 32- 35 give another sign, this one on earth. The separating of the wheat from the tares is a work in the "heavens," the religious world. The sign of the fig tree budding is of the earth. refers to the nation of Israel, which has come into Divine favour; surely Israel's hopes are budding again. When we see all these things, know that it is near. That is, the generation seeing all these signs of Christ's presence shall not pass until the great trouble has occurred, and the Kingdom of righteousness and

peace has been established.

Verses 36- 39. These verses clearly indicate that just as Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years before the Flood, So Christ would be present for some time before the great calamity which is to destroy the world systems of this evil day. Noah preached and warned, but they went on with their own selfish pursuits, regardless of the message. They "knew not."

2Pe 3:3- 7, 10, 12, 13 foretell similar conditions; and are not these conditions with us today? Luke 17:26- 30 also mentions the conditions in Sodom and Gomorrah, and they also refused the message in the days of Lot, and both Matthew and Luke state that "as it was in the days of Noah" and "in the days of Lot," So also shall it be in the days of the Son of man. Thus the Scriptures clearly declare that Christ would be present for some time prior to the great calamity, although only the watchers would know of His presence. All others, as in the time of Noah and Lot, are not to know.

The important thing is to watch, for no one should know the day nor the hour of the Lord's arrival, nor of the actual time when the great time of trouble will overwhelm the world.

The Lord did not inform the disciples So that the Church might fix dates for future events. In answer to the query, "when shall these things be?" He simply has given the signs of His presence and told us to "watch," So that we may discern His presence when He has come. Then we may enter the feast of spiritual things which He has promised to His waiting people, and will be one by one called away to be with the Lord "in the air."

Before He will set up His Kingdom He will gather His elect from the four winds of heaven. Then the saints are to share the glorious work of that Kingdom of peace. Satan, however, must first be bound, and the Church are to have something to do in this connection, for the promise is, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Then, the time of trouble over, the Prince of Peace shall reign from shore to shore, and the prayer will be answered, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." (Revelation 21:1- 4.)

Following this highly figurative statement of prophecy in answer to the disciple's question respecting His second presence, the Lord gives three illustrative parables which indicate progressive conditions and work that will occupy Him on His return.

The "Ten Virgins" parable shows the proper attitude of the watching Christians, and how some will fail.

The Parable of the "Talents" shows how the Lord will have a work to do among Christians, in winding up the affairs of the Gospel Age, completing the number of God's elect.

The Parable of "The Sheep and the Goats" then follows, showing the work of the Kingdom Age, when the Church, with Christ, are to judge the world during that thousand years' reign (1 Corinthians 6:2) . Matthew 25:31 very distinctly informs us that the parable is applicable to that time. "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate one from another."

For nearly 1900 years God has been judging and selecting the Church, for the "High calling in Christ Jesus." During that thousand years' reign of Christ the whole world will have the advantage of the judgments of the Lord, and Isaiah 26:9 states that "when Thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Psalms 22:27, 28.)

Those rightly exercised by the favourable conditions of that time of blessing (Psalm 72; Isaiah 35) will develop hearts of love and care for their fellows, but others of the goat nature will not respond, but will think only of their own selfish ease and pleasure.

The righteous do kindness by nature without thinking of it, the unrighteous never think of doing kindness that will involve any cost or sacrifice. Eternal life is only designed for such as become righteous, such as are restored to "the image and likeness of God," lost by the first Adam, but restored to all the willing and obedient by the Second Adam. Time and space would fail to tell of the blessings of that glorious Kingdom of Christ. No wonder the angels sang "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill towards men," and said, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

The righteous receive eternal life and enter into the Kingdom "prepared for them from the foundation of the world"- Paradise- the earthly home. The wicked will be cut off for ever. They have been redeemed from the Adamic sentence of death by the Cross of Christ, but will again incur the death penalty- the second death from which there is no redemption. It will be an everlasting punishment. The Greek word signifies a "cutting off" as a branch is lopped off a tree. There is no life for humanity apart from Christ, who, "by the grace of God tasted death for every man."