

CHAPTER 24

Christ's preaching was mostly practical; but, in this chapter, we have a prophetic discourse, a prediction of things to come; such however as had a practical tendency, and was intended, not to gratify the curiosity of his disciples, but to guide their consciences and conversations, and it is therefore concluded with a practical application. The church has always had particular prophecies, besides general promises, both for direction and for encouragement to believers; but it is observable, Christ preached this prophetic sermon in the close of his ministry, as the Apocalypse is the last book of the New Testament, and the prophetic books of the Old Testament are placed last, to intimate to us, that we must be well grounded in plain truths and duties, and those must first be well digested, before we dive into those things that are dark and difficult; many run themselves into confusion by beginning their Bible at the wrong end. Now, in this chapter, we have,

- I.** The occasion of this discourse (v. 1-3).
- II.** The discourse itself, in which we have,
 - 1.** The prophecy of divers events, especially referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter ruin of the Jewish church and nation, which were not hastening on, and were completed about forty years after; the prefaces to that destruction, the concomitants and consequences of it; yet looking further, to Christ's coming at the end of time, and the consummation of all things, of which that was a type and figure (v. 4-31).
 - 2.** The practical application of this prophecy for the awakening and quickening of his disciples to prepare for these great and awful things (v. 32-51).

◀▶ **MATTHEW 24:1-3**

AWFUL PREDICTIONS

Here is,

I. Christ's quitting *the temple*, and his public work there. He had said, in the close of the foregoing chapter, *Your house is left unto you desolate*; and here he made his words good; *He went out, and departed from the temple*. The manner of expression is observable; he not only went out of the temple, but departed from it, took his final farewell of it; he departed from it, never to return to it any more; and then immediately follows a prediction of its ruin. Note, That house is left desolate indeed, which Christ leaves. *Woe unto them when I depart*, ~~202~~ Hosea 9:12; ~~203~~ Jeremiah 6:8. It was now time to groan out their *Ichabod*, *The glory is departed, their defence is departed*. Three days after this, the veil of the temple was rent; when Christ left it, all became *common and unclean*; but Christ departed not till they drove him away; did not reject them, till they first rejected him.

II. His private discourse with his disciples; he left the temple, but he did not leave the twelve, who were the seed of the gospel church, which the casting off of the Jews was the enriching of. When he left the temple, his disciples left it too, and came to him. Note, It is good being where Christ is, and leaving that which he leaves. They came to him, to be instructed in private, when his public preaching was over; for *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*. He had spoken of the destruction of the Jewish church to the multitude in parables, which here, as usual, he explains to his disciples. Observe,

1. *His disciples came to him, to show him the buildings of the temple*, It was a stately and beautiful structure, one of the wonders of the world; no cost was spared, no art left untried, to make it sumptuous. Though it came short of Solomon's temple, and *its beginning was small, yet its latter end did greatly increase*. It was richly furnished with gifts and offerings, to which there were continual additions made. They showed Christ these things, and desired him to take notice of them, either,

(1.) As being greatly pleased with them themselves, and expecting he should be so too. They had lived mostly in Galilee, at a distance from the temple, had seldom seen it, and therefore were the more struck with admiration at it, and thought he should admire as much as they did *all this glory* (~~204~~ Genesis 31:1); and they would have him divert himself (after his preaching, and from his sorrow which they saw him perhaps almost overwhelmed with) with looking about him. Note, Even good men are apt to be too much enamoured with outward pomp and gaiety, and to

overvalue it, even in the things of God; whereas we should be, as Christ was, dead to it, and look upon it with contempt. The temple was indeed glorious, but,

[1.] Its glory was sullied and stained with the sin of the priests and people; that wicked doctrine of the Pharisees, which preferred the gold before the temple that sanctified it, was enough to deface the beauty of all the ornaments of the temple.

[2.] Its glory was eclipsed and outdone by the presence of Christ in it, who was *the glory of this latter house* (^{<309>}Haggai 2:9), so that the buildings had no glory, in comparison with that glory which excelled.

Or,

(2.) As grieving that this house should be left desolate; they showed him the buildings, as if they would move him to reverse the sentence; “Lord, let not this holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, be made a desolation.” They forgot how many providences, concerning Solomon's temple, had manifested how little God cared for that outward glory which they had so much admired, when the people were wicked, ^{<402>}2 Chronicles 7:21. *This house, which is high, sin will bring low.* Christ had lately looked upon *the precious souls, and wept for them*, ^{<404>}Luke 19:41. The disciples look upon the pompous buildings, and are ready to weep for them. In this, as in other things, *his thoughts are not like ours*. It was weakness, and meanness of spirit, in the disciples, to be so fond of fine buildings; it was a childish thing. *Animo magno nihil magnum — To a great mind nothing is great.* Seneca.

2. Christ, hereupon, foretels the utter ruin and destruction that were coming upon this place, v. 2. Note, A believing foresight of the defacing of all worldly glory will help to take us off from admiring it, and overvaluing it. The most beautiful body will be shortly worms' meat, and the most beautiful building a ruinous heap. And shall we then set our eyes upon that which so soon is not, and look upon that with so much admiration which ere long we shall certainly look upon with so much contempt? *See ye not all these things?* They would have Christ look upon them, and be as much in love with them as they were; he would have them look upon them, and be as dead to them as he was. There is such a sight of these things as will do us good; so to see them as to see through them and see to the end of them.

Christ, instead of reversing the decree, ratifies it; *Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another.*

(1.) He speaks of it as a certain ruin; “*I say unto you. I, that know what I say, and know how to make good what I say; take my word for it, it shall be so; I, the Amen, the true Witness, say it to you.*” All judgment being committed to the Son, the threatenings, as well as the promises, are all *yea, and amen, in him.* ^{<3017>}Hebrews 6:17, 18.

(2.) He speaks of it as an utter ruin. The temple shall not only be stripped, and plundered, and defaced, but utterly demolished and laid waste; *Not one stone shall be left upon another.* Notice is taken, in the *building* of the second temple, of the *laying of one stone upon another* (^{<3025>}Haggai 2:15); and here, in the *ruin*, of *not leaving one stone upon another.* History tells us, that this was fulfilled in the latter; for though Titus, when he took the city, did all he could to preserve the temple, yet he could not restrain the enraged soldiers from destroying it utterly; and it was done to that degree, that Turnus Rufus ploughed up the ground on which it had stood: thus that scripture was fulfilled (^{<3082>}Micah 3:12), *Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field.* And afterward, in Julian the Apostate's time, when the Jews were encouraged by him to rebuild their temple, in opposition to the Christian religion, what remained of the ruins was quite pulled down, to level the ground for a new foundation; but the attempt was defeated by the miraculous eruption of fire out of the ground, which destroyed the foundation they laid, and frightened away the builders. Now this prediction of the final and irreparable ruin of the temple includes a prediction of the period of the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law.

3. The disciples, not disputing either the truth or the equity of this sentence, nor doubting of the accomplishment of it, enquire more particularly of the time when it should come to pass, and the signs of its approach, v. 3. Observe,

(1.) Where they made this enquiry; privately, *as he sat upon the mount of Olives*; probably, he was returning to Bethany, and there sat down by the way, to rest him; the mount of Olives directly faced the temple, and from thence he might have a full prospect of it at some distance; there he sat as a Judge upon the bench, the temple and city being before him as at the bar, and thus he passed sentence on them. We read (^{<3123>}Ezekiel 11:23) of the

removing of the glory of the Lord from the temple to the mountain; so Christ, the great Shechinah, here removes to this mountain.

(2.) What the enquiry itself was; *When shall these things be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* Here are three questions.

[1.] Some think, these questions do all point at one and the same thing — the destruction of the temple, and the period of the Jewish church and nation, which Christ had himself spoken of as his coming (~~4163~~ Matthew 16:28), and which would be the consummation of the age (for so it may be read), the finishing of that dispensation. Or, they thought the destruction of the temple must needs be the end of the world. If that house be laid waste, the world cannot stand; for the Rabbin used to say that the house of the sanctuary was one of the seven things for the sake of which the world was made; and they think, if so, the world will not survive the temple.

[2.] Others think their question, *When shall these things be?* refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the other two to the end of the world; or Christ's coming may refer to his setting up his gospel kingdom, and the end of the world to the day of judgment. I rather incline to think that their question looked no further than the event Christ now foretold; but it appears by other passages, that they had very confused thoughts of future events; so that perhaps it is not possible to put any certain construction upon this question of theirs.

But Christ, in his answer, though he does not expressly rectify the mistakes of his disciples (that must be done by the pouring out of the Spirit), yet looks further than their question, and instructs his church, not only concerning the great events of that age, the destruction of Jerusalem, but concerning his second coming at the end of time, which here he insensibly slides into a discourse of, and of that it is plain he speaks in the next chapter, which is a continuation of this sermon.

~~4163~~ MATTHEW 24:4-31

AWFUL PREDICTIONS

The disciples had asked concerning the times, *When shall these things be?* Christ gives them no answer to that, after what number of days and years

his prediction should be accomplished, for *it is not for us to know the times* (^{40E}Acts 1:7); but they had asked, *What shall be the sign?* That question he answers fully, for we are concerned to *understand the signs of the times*, (^{41E}Matthew 16:3. Now the prophecy primarily respects the events near at hand — the destruction of Jerusalem, the period of the Jewish church and state, the calling of the Gentiles, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world; but as the prophecies of the Old Testament, which have an immediate reference to the affairs of the Jews and the revolutions of their state, under the figure of them do certainly look further, to the gospel church and the kingdom of the Messiah, and are so expounded in the New Testament, and such expressions are found in those predictions as are peculiar thereto and not applicable otherwise; so this prophecy, under the type of Jerusalem's destruction, looks as far forward as the general judgment; and, as is usual in prophecies, some passages are most applicable to the type, and others to the antitype; and toward the close, as usual, it points more particularly to the latter. It is observable, that what Christ here saith to his disciples tends more to engage their caution than to satisfy their curiosity; more to prepare them for the events that should happen than to give them a distinct idea of the events themselves. This is that good understanding of the time which we should all covet, thence to infer what Israel ought to do: and so this prophecy is of standing lasting use to the church, and will be so to the end of time; for *the thing that hath been, is that which shall be* (^{20E}Ecclesiastes 1:5, 6, 7, 9), and the series, connection, and presages, of events, are much the same still that they were then; so that upon the prophecy of this chapter, pointing at that event, moral prognostications may be made, and such constructions of the signs of the times as the wise man's heart will know how to improve.

I. Christ here foretels the going forth of deceivers; he begins with a caution, *Take heed that no man deceive you.* They expected to be told when these things should be, to be let into that secret; but this caution is a check to their curiosity, "*What is that to you? Mind you your duty, follow me, and be not seduced from following me.*" Those that are most inquisitive concerning the secret things which belong not to them are most easily imposed upon by seducers, (^{31E}2 Thessalonians 2:3. The disciples, when they heard that the Jews, their most inveterate enemies, should be destroyed, might be in danger of falling into security; "Nay," saith Christ, "you are more exposed other ways." Seducers are more dangerous enemies to the church than persecutors.

Three times in this discourse he mentions the appearing of *false prophets*, which was,

1. A presage of Jerusalem's ruin. Justly were they who killed the true prophets, left to be ensnared by false prophets; and they who crucified the true Messiah, left to be deceived and broken by false Christs and pretended Messiahs. The appearing of these was the occasion of dividing that people into parties and factions, which made their ruin the more easy and speedy; and the sin of the many that were led aside by them, helped to fill the measure.

2. It was a trial to the disciples of Christ, and therefore agreeable to their state of probation, *that they which are perfect, may be made manifest.*

Now concerning these deceivers, observe here,

(1.) The pretences they should come under. Satan acts most mischievously, when he appears as an angel of light: the colour of the greatest good is often the cover of the greatest evil.

[1.] There should appear *false prophets* (v. 11-24); the deceivers would pretend to divine inspiration, an immediate mission, and a spirit of prophecy, when it was all a lie. Such they had been formerly (²³²⁶Jeremiah 23:16; ³¹³⁶Ezekiel 13:6), as was foretold, (⁴⁵³³Deuteronomy 13:3). Some think, the seducers here pointed to were such as had been settled teachers in the church, and had gained reputation as such, but afterward betrayed the truth they had taught, and revolted to error; and from such the danger is the greater, because least suspected. One false traitor in the garrison may do more mischief than a thousand avowed enemies without.

[2.] There should appear *false Christs, coming in Christ's name* (v. 5), assuming to themselves the name peculiar to him, and saying, *I am Christ, pseudo-christs*, v. 24. There was at that time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messiah; they spoke of him; as *he that should come*; but when he did come, the body of the nation rejected him; which those who were ambitious of making themselves a name, took advantage of, and set up for Christ. Josephus speaks of several such impostors between this and the destruction of Jerusalem; one Theudas, that was defeated by Cospius Fadus; another by Felix, another by Festus. Dositheus said he was the Christ foretold by Moses. *Origen adversus Celsum*. See ⁴⁴⁵⁵Acts 5:36, 37. Simon Magus pretended to be *the great power of God*, ⁴⁴⁸⁰Acts 8:10. In

after-ages there have been such pretenders; one about a hundred years after Christ, that called himself *Bar-cochobas* — *The son of a star*, but proved *Bar-cosba* — *The son of a lie*. About fifty years ago Sabbati-Levi set up for a Messiah in the Turkish empire, and was greatly caressed by the Jews; but in a short time *his folly was made manifest*. See Sir Paul Rycaut's *History*. The popish religion doth, in effect, set up a false Christ; the Pope comes, in Christ's name, as his vicar, but invades and usurps all his offices, and so is a rival with him, and, as such, an enemy to him, a deceiver, and an antichrist.

[3.] These false Christs and false prophets would have their agents and emissaries busy in all places to draw people in to them. them, v. 23. *Then* when public troubles are great and threatening, and people will be catching at any thing that looks like deliverance, then Satan will take the advantage of imposing on them; they will say, *Lo, here is a Christ, or there is one*; but do not mind them: the true Christ did not strive, nor cry; nor was it said of him, *Lo, here! or Lo, there!* (^{<402>}Luke 17:21), therefore if any man say so concerning him, look upon it as a temptation. The hermits, who place religion in a monastical life, say, *He is in the desert*; the priests, who made the consecrated wafer to be Christ, say, “He is *en tois tameiois* — *in the cupboards, in the secret chambers*: lo, he is in this shrine, in that image.” Thus some appropriate Christ's spiritual presence to one party or persuasion, as if they had the monopoly of Christ and Christianity; and the kingdom of Christ must stand and fall, must live and die, with them; “Lo, he is in this church, in that council:” whereas Christ is All in all, not here or there, but meets his people with a blessing *in every place where he records his name*.

(2.) The proof they should offer for the making good of these pretences; *They shall show great signs and wonders* (v. 24), not true miracles, those are a divine seal, and with those the doctrine of Christ stands confirmed; and therefore if any offer to draw us from that by signs and wonders, we must have recourse to that rule given of old (^{<481>}Deuteronomy 13:1-3), *If the sign or wonder come to pass, yet follow not him that would draw you to serve other gods, or believe in other Christs, for the Lord your God proveth you*. But these were *lying wonders* (^{<589>}2 Thessalonians 2:9), wrought by Satan (God permitting him), who is *the prince of the power of the air*. It is not said, *They shall work miracles*, but, *They shall show great signs*; they are but a show; either they impose upon men's credulity by

false narratives, or deceive their senses by tricks of legerdemain, or arts of divination, as the magicians of Egypt by their enchantments.

(3.) The success they should have in these attempts,

[1.] *They shall deceive many* (v. 5), and again, v. 11. Note, The devil and his instruments may prevail far in deceiving poor souls; few find the strait gate, but many are drawn into the broad way; many will be imposed upon by their signs and wonders, and many drawn in by the hopes of deliverance from their oppressions. Note, Neither miracles nor multitudes are certain signs of a true church; for *all the world wonders after the beast*, Revelation 13:3.

[2.] *They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect*, v. 24. This bespeaks, *First*, The strength of the delusion; it is such as many shall be carried away by (so strong shall the stream be), even those that were thought to stand fast. Men's knowledge, gifts, learning, eminent station, and long profession, will not secure them; but, notwithstanding these, many will be deceived; nothing but the almighty grace of God, pursuant to his eternal purpose, will be a protection. *Secondly*, The safety of the elect in the midst of this danger, which is taken for granted in that parenthesis, *If it were possible*, plainly implying that it is not possible, for they are *kept by the power of God*, that *the purpose of God, according to the election, may stand*. It is possible for those that have been enlightened to fall away (Hebrews 6:4, 5, 6), but not for those that were elected. If God's chosen ones should be deceived, God's choice would be defeated, which is not to be imagined, *for whom he did predestinate, he called, justified, and glorified*, Romans 8:30. They were given to Christ; and of all that were given to him, he will lose none, John 10:28. Grotius will have this to be meant of the great difficulty of drawing the primitive Christians from their religion, and quotes it as used proverbially by Galen; when he would express a thing very difficult and morally impossible, he saith, "You may sooner draw away a Christian from Christ."

(4.) The repeated cautions which our Saviour gives to his disciples to stand upon their guard against them; *therefore* he gave them warning, that they might watch (v. 25); *Behold, I have told you before*. He that is told before where he will be assaulted, may save himself, as the king of Israel did, 2 Kings 6:9, 10. Note, Christ's warnings are designed to engage our watchfulness; and though the elect shall be preserved from delusion, yet they shall be preserved by the use of appointed means, and a due regard to

the cautions of the word; we are kept through faith, faith in Christ's word, which he has told us before.

[1.] We must not believe those who say, *Lo, here is Christ*; or, *Lo, he is there*, v. 23. We believe that the true Christ is at the right hand of God, and that his spiritual presence is *where two or three are gathered together in his name*; believe not those therefore who would draw you off from a Christ in heaven, by telling you he is any where on earth; or draw you off from the catholic church on earth, by telling you he is here, or he is there; believe it not. Note, There is not a greater enemy to true faith than vain credulity. The simple believeth every word, and runs after every cry.
Memneso apistein — *Beware of believing.*

[2.] We must not go forth after those that say, *He is in the desert*, or, *He is in the secret chambers*, v. 26. We must not hearken to every empiric and pretender, nor follow every one that puts up the finger to point us to a new Christ, and a new gospel; “Go not forth, for if you do, you are in danger of being taken by them; therefore keep out of harm's way, *be not carried about with every wind*; many a man's vain curiosity to go forth hath led him into a fatal apostasy; your strength at such a time is to sit still, to have the heart established with grace.”

II. He foretels wars and great commotions among the nations, v. 6, 7. When Christ was born, there was a universal peace in the empire, the temple of Janus was shut; but *think not that Christ came to send*, or continue such a *peace* (^{<405>}Luke 12:51); no, his city and his wall are to be built even in troublesome times, and even wars shall forward his work. From the time that the Jews rejected Christ, and he *left their house desolate*, *the sword did never depart from their house*, *the sword of the Lord* was never quiet, because he had given it a charge against a hypocritical nation and the people of his wrath, and by it brought ruin upon them.

Here is,

1. A prediction of the event of the day; You will now shortly *hear of wars*, and *rumours of wars*. When wars are, they will be heard; for *every battle of the warrior is with confused noise*, ^{<395>}Isaiah 9:5. See how terrible it is (^{<249>}Jeremiah 4:19), *Thou hast heard, O my soul, the alarm of war!* Even the quiet in the land, and the least inquisitive after new things, cannot but hear the rumours of war. See what comes of refusing the gospel! Those

that will not hear the messengers of peace, shall be made to hear the messengers of war. God has a sword ready to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, his new covenant. *Nation shall rise up against nation*, that is, one part or province of the Jewish nation against another, one city against another (^{<445>}2 Chronicles 15:5, 6); and in the same province and city one party or faction shall rise up against another, so that they shall be devoured by, and dashed in pieces against one another, ^{<209>}Isaiah 9:19-21.

2. A prescription of the duty of the day; *See that ye be not troubled*. Is it possible to hear such sad news, and not be troubled? Yet, where the heart is fixed, trusting in God, it is kept in peace, and is not afraid, no not of the evil tidings of wars, and rumours of wars; no not the noise of *Arm, arm*. *Be not troubled; Me throeithe* — *Be not put into confusion or commotion*; not put into throes, as a woman with child by a fright; *see that ye be not orate*. Note, There is need of constant care and watchfulness to keep trouble from the heart when there are wars abroad; and it is against the mind of Christ, that his people should have troubled hearts even in troublous times.

We must not be troubled, for two reasons.

(1.) Because we are bid to expect this: the Jews must be punished, ruin must be brought upon them; by this the justice of God and the honour of the Redeemer must be asserted; and therefore *all those things must come to pass*; the word is gone out of God's mouth, and it shall be accomplished in its season. Note, The consideration of the unchangeableness of the divine counsels, which govern all events, should compose and quiet our spirits, whatever happens. God is but performing the thing that is appointed for us, and our inordinate trouble is an interpretative quarrel with that appointment. Let us therefore acquiesce, because *these things must come to pass*; not only *necessitate decreti* — *as the product of the divine counsel*, but *necessitate medii* — *as a means in order to a further end*. The old house must be taken down (though it cannot be done without noise, and dust, and danger), ere the new fabric can be erected: the things that are shaken (and ill shaken they were) *must be removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain*, ^{<327>}Hebrews 12:27.

(2.) Because we are still to expect worse; *The end is not yet*; the end of time is not, and, while time lasts, we must expect trouble, and that the end of one affliction will be but the beginning of another; or, “The end of these troubles is not yet; there must be more judgments that one made use of to

bring down the Jewish power; more vials of wrath must yet be poured out; there is but one woe past, more woes are yet to come, more arrows are yet to be spent upon them out of God's quiver; therefore be not troubled, do not give way to fear and trouble, sink not under the present burthen, but rather gather in all the strength and spirit you have, to encounter what is yet before you. Be not troubled to hear of wars and rumours of wars; for then what will become of you when the famines and pestilences come?" If it be to us a vexation but to *understand the report* (²³⁸⁹Isaiah 28:19), what will it be to feel the stroke when it *toucheth the bone and the flesh*? If running with the footmen weary us, how shall we contend with horses? And if we be frightened at a little brook in our way, *what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan*? ²⁴⁰⁵Jeremiah 12:5.

III. He foretels other judgments more immediately sent of God — *famines, pestilences, and earthquakes*. Famine is often the effect of war, and pestilence of famine. These were the three judgments which David was to choose one out of; and he was in a great strait, for he knew not which was the worst: but what dreadful desolations will they make, when they all pour in together upon a people! Beside war (and that is enough), there shall be,

- 1.** *Famine*, signified by the *black horse* under the *third seal*, ⁶⁶⁵Revelation 6:5, 6. We read of a famine in Judea, not long after Christ's time, which was very impoverishing (⁴⁴³Acts 11:28); but the sorest famine was in Jerusalem during the siege. See ²³⁰⁹Lamentations 4:9, 10.
- 2.** *Pestilences*, signified by the *pale horse, and death upon him, and the grave at his heels*, under the *fourth seal*, ⁶⁶⁷Revelation 6:7, 8. This destroys without distinction, and in a little time lays heaps upon heaps.
- 3.** *Earthquakes in divers places*, or from place to place, pursuing those that flee from them, as they did from the earthquake *in the days of Uzziah*, ³⁴⁵Zechariah 14:5. Great desolations have sometimes been made by earthquakes, of late and formerly; they have been the death of many, and the terror of more. In the apocalyptic visions, it is observable, that earthquakes bode good, and no evil, to the church, ³⁶²Revelation 6:12. Compare ⁶⁶³Revelation 6:15; 11:12, 13, 19; 16:17-19. When God *shakes terribly the earth* (²¹²¹Isaiah 2:21), it is to *shake the wicked out of it* (³⁸⁸³Job 38:13), and to introduce *the desire of all nations*, ³⁰²⁶Haggai 2:6, 7. But here they are spoken of as dreadful judgments, and yet but *the beginning*

of sorrows, *odinon* — of *travailing pains*, quick, violent, yet tedious too. Note, When God judgeth, he will overcome; *when he begins in wrath, he will make a full end*, ^{<4982>}1 Samuel 3:12. When we look forward to the eternity of misery that is before the obstinate refusers of Christ and his gospel, we may truly say, concerning the greatest temporal judgments, “They are but the beginning of sorrows; bad as things are with them, there are worse behind.”

IV. He foretels the persecution of his own people and ministers, and a general apostasy and decay in religion thereupon, v. 9, 10, 12. Observe,

1. The *cross* itself foretold, v. 9. Note, Of all future events we are as much concerned, though commonly as little desirous, to know of our own sufferings as of any thing else. *Then*, when famines and pestilences prevail, then they shall impute them to the Christians, and make that a pretence for persecuting them; *Christianos ad leones* — *Away with Christians to the lions*. Christ had told his disciples, when he first sent them out, what hard things they should suffer; but they had hitherto experienced little of it, and therefore he reminds them again, that the less they had suffered, the more there was behind to be filled up, ^{<5124>}Colossians 1:24.

(1.) They shall be *afflicted* with bonds and imprisonments, *cruel mockings and scourgings*, as blessed Paul (^{<49123>}2 Corinthians 11:23-25); not killed outright, but *killed all the day long, in deaths often*, killed so as to feel themselves die, *made a spectacle to the world*, ^{<4949>}1 Corinthians 4:9, 11.

(2.) They shall be *killed*; so cruel are the church's enemies, that nothing less will satisfy them than the blood of the saints, which they thirst after, suck, and shed, like water.

(3.) They shall be *hated of all nations for Christ's name's sake*, as he had told them before, ^{<49122>}Matthew 10:22. The world was generally leavened with enmity and malignity to Christians: the Jews, though spiteful to the Heathen, were never persecuted by them as the Christians were; they were hated by the Jews that were dispersed among the nations, were the common butt of the world's malice. What shall we think of this world, when the best men had the worst usage in it? It is the cause that makes the martyr, and comforts him; it was for Christ's sake that they were thus hated; their professing and preaching his name incensed the nations so much against them; the devil, finding a fatal shock thereby given to his

kingdom, and that his time was likely to be short, *came down, having great wrath.*

2. *The offence of the cross*, v. 10-12. Satan thus carries on his interest by force of arms, though Christ, at length, will bring glory to himself out of the sufferings of his people and ministers. Three ill effects of persecution are here foretold.

(1.) The *apostasy* of some. When the profession of Christianity begins to cost men dear, *then shall many be offended*, shall first fall out with, and then fall off from, their profession; they will begin to pick quarrels with their religion, sit loose to it, grow weary of it, and at length revolt from it. Note,

[1.] It is no new thing (though it is a strange thing) for those that have known the way of righteousness, to turn aside out of it. Paul often complains of deserters, who began well, but something hindered them. They were with us, but went out from us, because never truly of us, ~~1~~ John 2:19. We are told of it before.

[2.] Suffering times are shaking times; and those fall in the storm, that stood in fair weather, like the *stony ground hearers*, ~~1~~ Matthew 13:21. Many will follow Christ in the sunshine, who will shift for themselves, and leave him to do so to, in the cloudy dark day. They like their religion while they can have it cheap, and sleep with it in a whole skin; but, if their profession cost them any thing, they quit it presently.

(2.) The *malignity* of others. When persecution is in fashion, envy, enmity, and malice, are strangely diffused into the minds of men by contagion: and charity, tenderness, and moderation, are looked upon as singularities, which make a man like a speckled bird. Then *they shall betray one another*, that is, "Those that have treacherously deserted their religion, shall hate and betray those who adhere to it, for whom they have pretended friendship." Apostates have commonly been the most bitter and violent persecutors. Note, Persecuting times are discovering times. Wolves in sheep's clothing will then throw off their disguise, and appear wolves: they shall *betray one another, and hate one another*. The times must needs be perilous, when treachery and hatred, two of the worst things that can be, because directly contrary to two of the best (truth and love), shall have the ascendant. This seems to refer to the barbarous treatment which the several contending factions among the Jews gave to one another; and

justly were they who ate up God's people as they ate bread, left thus to bite and devour one another till they were *consumed one of another*; or, it may refer to the mischiefs done to Christ's disciples by those that were nearest to them, as <sup>^[101]Matthew 10:21. *The brother shall deliver up the brother to death.*

(3.) The general *declining* and *cooling* of most, v. 12. In seducing times, when false prophets arise, in persecuting times, when the saints are hated, expect these two things,

[1.] The *abounding* of iniquity; though the world always lies in wickedness, yet there are some times in which it may be said, that *iniquity doth* in a special manner abound; as when it is more extensive than ordinary, as in the old world, when *all flesh had corrupted their way*; and when it is more *excessive* than ordinary, when *violence is risen up to a rod of wickedness* (<sup>^[201]Ezekiel 7:11), so that hell seems to be broke loose in blasphemies against God, and enmities to the saints.

[2.] The *abating* of love; this is the consequence of the former; *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*. Understand it in general of true serious godliness, which is all summed up in *love*; it is too common for professors of religion to grow cool in their profession, when the wicked are hot in their wickedness; as the church of Ephesus in bad times *left her first love*, <sup>^[301]Revelation 2:2-4. Or, it may be understood more particularly of brotherly love. When iniquity abounds, seducing iniquity, persecuting iniquity, this grace commonly waxes cold. Christians begin to be shy and suspicious one of another, affections are alienated, distances created, parties made, and so love comes to nothing. The devil is the accuser of the brethren, not only to their enemies, which makes persecuting iniquity abound, but one to another, which makes the love of many to wax cold.

This gives a melancholy prospect of the times, that there shall be such a great decay of love; but, *First*, It is of the love of *many*, not of *all*. In the worst of times, God has his remnant that hold fast their integrity, and retain their zeal, as in Elijah's days, when he thought himself left alone. *Secondly*, This love is grown cold, but not dead; it abates, but is not quite cast off. There is life in the root, which will show itself when the winter is past. The new nature may *wax cold*, but shall not *wax old*, for then it would decay and vanish away.

3. Comfort administered in reference to this offence of the cross, for the support of the Lord's people under it (v. 13); *He that endures to the end, shall be saved.*

(1.) It is comfortable to those who wish well to the cause of Christ in general, that, though many are offended, yet some shall endure to the end. When we see so many drawing back, we are ready to fear that the cause of Christ will sink for want of supporters, and his name be left and forgotten for want of some to make profession of it; but even at this time there is *a remnant according to the election of grace*, ^{<B11>}Romans 11:5. It is spoken of the same time that this prophecy has reference to; a remnant who are not of *them that draw back unto perdition*, but believe and persevere *to the saving of the soul*; they endure to the end, to the end of their lives, to the end of their present state of probation, or to the end of these suffering trying times, to the last encounter, though they should be called to resist unto blood.

(2.) It is comfortable to those who do thus endure to the end, and suffer for their constancy, that they shall be saved. Perseverance wins the crown, through free grace, and shall wear it. *They shall be saved*: perhaps they may be delivered out of their troubles, and comfortably survive them in this world; but it is eternal salvation that is here intended. They that endure to the end of their days, shall then receive the end of their faith and hope, *even the salvation of their souls*, ^{<B12>}1 Peter 1:9; ^{<B13>}Romans 2:7; ^{<B14>}Revelation 3:20. The crown of glory will make amends for all; and a believing regard to that will enable us to choose rather to die at a stake with the persecuted, than to live in a palace with the persecutors.

V. He foretels the preaching of the gospel in all the world (v. 14); *This gospel shall be preached, and then shall the end come.* Observe here,

1. It is called *the gospel of the kingdom*, because it reveals the kingdom of grace, which leads to the kingdom of glory; sets up Christ's kingdom in this world; and secures ours in the other world.

2. This gospel, sooner or later, is to be preached in all the world, to every creature, and all nations are to be discipled by it; for in it Christ is to be *Salvation to the ends of the earth*; for this end the gift of tongues was *the first-fruits of the Spirit*.

3. The gospel is preached *for a witness to all nations*, that is, a faithful declaration of the mind and will of God concerning the duty which God requires from man, and the recompence which man may expect from God. It is a *record* (^{<51>}John 5:11), it is a *witness*, for those who believe, that they shall be saved, and against those who persist in unbelief, that they shall be damned. See ^{<416>}Mark 16:16. But how does this come in here?

(1.) It is intimated that the gospel should be, if not heard, yet at least heard of, throughout the then known world, before the destruction of Jerusalem; that the Old-Testament church should not be quite dissolved till the New Testament was pretty well settled, had got considerable footing, and began to make some figure. Better is the face of a corrupt degenerate church than none at all. Within forty years after Christ's death, the *sound* of the gospel was *gone forth to the ends of the earth*, ^{<508>}Romans 10:18. St. Paul *fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum*; and the other apostles were not idle. The persecuting of the saints at Jerusalem helped to disperse them, so that they *went every where, preaching the word*, ^{<481>}Acts 8:1-4. And when the tidings of the Redeemer are sent over all parts of the world, then shall come the end of the Jewish state. Thus, that which they thought to prevent, by putting Christ to death, they thereby procured; all men *believed on him, and the Romans came, and took away their place and nation*, ^{<518>}John 11:48. Paul speaks of the gospel being *come to all the world, and preached to every creature*, ^{<506>}Colossians 1:6-23.

(2.) It is likewise intimated that even in times of temptation, trouble, and persecution, the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached and propagated, and shall force its way through the greatest opposition. Though the enemies of the church grow very *hot*, and many of her friends very *cool*, yet the gospel shall be preached. And even *then*, when many fall by the sword and by flame, and many do wickedly, and are corrupted by flatteries, yet then the people that do know their God, shall be strengthened to do the greatest exploits of all, in instructing many; see ^{<712>}Daniel 11:32, 33; and see an instance, ^{<502>}Philippians 1:12-14.

(3.) That which seems chiefly intended here, is, that the end of the world shall be *then*, and not till then, when the gospel has done its work in the world. The gospel shall be preached, and that work carried on, when you are dead; so that all nations, first or last, shall have either the enjoyment, or the refusal, of the gospel; and *then cometh the end*, when the kingdom

shall be delivered up to God, even the Father; when the mystery of God shall be finished, the mystical body completed, and the nations either converted and saved, or convicted and silenced, by the gospel; then shall the end come, of which he had said before (v. 6, 7), not yet, not till those intermediate counsels be fulfilled. The world shall stand as long as any of God's chosen ones remain uncalled; but, when they are all gathered in, it will be set on fire immediately.

VI. He foretels more particularly the ruin that was coming upon the people of the Jews, their city, temple, and nation, v. 15, etc. Here he comes more closely to answer their questions concerning the desolation of the temple; and what he said here, would be of use to his disciples, both for their conduct and for their comfort, in reference to that great event; he describes the several steps of that calamity, such as are usual in war.

1. The Romans *setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place*, v. 15. Now,

(1.) Some understand by this an image, or statue, set up in the temple by some of the Roman governors, which was very offensive to the Jews, provoked them to rebel, and so brought the desolation upon them. The image of Jupiter Olympius, which Antiochus caused to be set upon the altar of God, is called *Bdelygma eremoseos* — *The abomination of desolation*, the very word here used by the historian, 1 Mac. 1:54. Since the captivity in Babylon, nothing was, nor could be, more distasteful to the Jews than an image in the holy place, as appeared by the mighty opposition they made when Caligula offered to set up his statue there, which had been of fatal consequence, if it had not been prevented, and the matter accommodated, by the conduct of Petronius; but Herod did set up an eagle over the temple-gate; and, some say, the statue of Titus was set up in the temple.

(2.) Others choose to expound it by the parallel place (⁴²¹Luke 21:20), *when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies*. Jerusalem was the holy city, Canaan the holy land, the Mount Moriah, which lay about Jerusalem, for its nearness to the temple was, they thought in a particular manner holy ground; on the country lying round about Jerusalem the Roman army was encamped, that was the abomination that made desolate. The land of an enemy is said to be *the land which thou abhorrest* (²¹⁶Isaiah 7:16); so an enemy's army to a weak but wilful people may well

be called *the abomination*. Now this is said to be *spoken of by Daniel, the prophet*, who spoke more plainly of the Messiah and his kingdom than any of the Old-Testament prophets did. He speaks of an abomination making desolate, which should be set up by Antiochus (^{<2113>}Daniel 11:31; 12:11); but this that our Saviour refers to, we have in the message that the angel brought him (^{<2107>}Daniel 9:27), of what should come at the end of seventy weeks, long after the former; *for the overspreading of abominations*, or, as the margin reads it, *with the abominable armies* (which comes home to the prophecy here), *he shall make it desolate*. Armies of idolaters may well be called *abominable armies*; and some think, the tumults, insurrections, and abominable factions and seditions, in the city and temple, may at least be taken in as part of the abomination making desolate. Christ refers them to that prophecy of Daniel, that they might see how the ruin of their city and temple was spoken of in the Old Testament, which would both confirm his prediction, and take off the odium of it. They might likewise from thence gather the time of it — soon after the cutting off of Messiah the prince; the sin that procured it — their rejecting him, and the certainty of it — *it is a desolation determined*. As Christ by his precepts confirmed the law, so by his predictions he confirmed the prophecies of the Old Testament, and it will be of good use to compare both together.

Reference being here had to a prophecy, which is commonly dark and obscure, Christ inserts this memorandum, “*Whoso readeth, let him understand*; whoso readeth the prophecy of Daniel, let him understand that it is to have its accomplishment now shortly in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Note, Those that read the scriptures, should labour to understand the scriptures, else their reading is to little purpose; we cannot use that which we do not understand. See ^{<4159>}John 5:39; ^{<4080>}Acts 8:30. The angel that delivered this prophecy to Daniel, stirred him up to *know and understand*, ^{<2105>}Daniel 9:25. And we must not despair of understanding even dark prophecies; the great New-Testament prophecy is called a *revelation*, not a *secret*. Now *things revealed belong to us*, and therefore must be humbly and diligently searched into. Or, *Let him understand*, not only the scriptures which speak of those things, but by the scriptures let him *understand the times*, ^{<1322>}1 Chronicles 12:32. Let him observe, and take notice; so some read it; let him be assured, that, notwithstanding the vain hopes with which the deluded people feed themselves, the abominable armies will make desolate.

2. The means of preservation which thinking men should betake themselves to (v. 16, 20); *Then let them which are in Judea, flee.* Then conclude there is no other way to help yourselves than by flying for the same. We may take this,

(1.) As a prediction of the ruin itself; that it should be irresistible; that it would be impossible for the stoutest hearts to make head against it, or contend with it, but they must have recourse to the last shift, getting out of the way. It bespeaks that which Jeremiah so much insisted upon, but in vain, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans, that it would be to no purpose to resist, but that it was their wisdom to yield and capitulate; so Christ here, to show how fruitless it would be to stand it out, bids every one make the best of his way.

(2.) We may take it as a direction to the followers of Christ what to do, not to say, *A confederacy* with those who fought and warred against the Romans for the preservation of their city and nation, only that they might consume the wealth of both upon their lusts (for to this very affair, the struggles of the Jews against the Roman power, some years before their final overthrow, the apostle refers, ^{SOD} James 4:1-3); but let them acquiesce in the decree that was gone forth, and with all speed quit the city and country, as they would quit a falling house or a sinking ship, as Lot quitted Sodom, and Israel the tents of Dathan and Abiram; he shows them,

[1.] Whither they must flee — from Judea *to the mountains*; not the mountains round about Jerusalem, but those in the remote corners of the land, which would be some shelter to them, not so much by their strength as by their secrecy. Israel is said to be *scattered upon the mountains* (^{2} Chronicles 18:16); and see ^{SIB} Hebrews 11:38. It would be safer among the lions' dens, and the mountains of the leopards, than among the seditious Jews or the enraged Romans. Note, In times of imminent peril and danger, it is not only lawful, but our duty, to seek our own preservation by all good and honest means; and if God opens a door of escape, we ought to make our escape, otherwise we do not trust God but tempt him. There may be a time when even *those that are in Judea*, where God is known, and his name is great, must *flee to the mountains*; and while we only go out of the way of danger, not out of the way of duty, we may trust God to provide *a dwelling for his outcasts*, ^{2304} Isaiah 16:4, 5. In times of public calamity, when it is manifest that we cannot be serviceable at home and may be safe

abroad, Providence calls us to make our escape. He that flees, may fight again.

[2.] What haste they must make, v. 17, 18. The life will be in danger, in imminent danger, the scourge will slay suddenly; and therefore he *that is on the house-top*, when the alarm comes, let him not *come down into the house*, to look after his effects there, but go the nearest way down, to make his escape; and so he that shall be *in the field*, will find it his wisest course to run immediately, and not return to fetch his clothes or the wealth of his house, for two reasons, *First*, Because the time which would be taken up in packing up his things, would delay his flight. Note, When death is at the door, delays are dangerous; it was the charge to Lot, *Look not behind thee*. Those that are convinced of the misery of a sinful state, and the ruin that attends them in that state, and, consequently, of the necessity of their fleeing to Christ, must take heed, lest, after all these convictions, they perish eternally by delays. *Secondly*, Because the carrying of his clothes, and his other movables and valuables with him, would but burthen him, and clog his flight. The Syrians, in their flight, *cast away their garments*, ⁴¹⁷⁵2 Kings 7:15. At such a time, we must be thankful *if our lives be given us for a prey*, though we can save nothing, ²⁴⁰⁴Jeremiah 45:4, 5. *For the life is more than meat*, ⁴¹⁶⁵Matthew 6:25. Those who carried off least, were safest in their flight. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator* — *The penniless traveller can lose nothing by robbers*. It was to his own disciples that Christ recommended this forgetfulness of their house and clothes, who had a habitation in heaven, treasure there, and durable clothing, which the enemy could not plunder them of. *Omnia mea mecum porto* — *I have all my property with me*, said Bias the philosopher in his flight, empty-handed. He that has grace in his heart carries his all along with him, when tripped of all.

Now those to whom Christ said this immediately, did not live to see this dismal day, none of all the twelve but John only; they needed not to be hidden in the mountains (Christ hid them in heaven), but they left the direction to their successors in profession, who pursued it, and it was of use to them; for when the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea saw the ruin coming on, they all retired to a town called *Pella*, on the other side Jordan, where they were safe; so that of the many thousands that perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, there was not so much as one Christian. See *Euseb. Ecclesiastes Hist. lib. 3, cap.*

5. Thus *the prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself*, ^{<171B>}Proverbs 22:3; ^{<81E>}Hebrews 11:7. This warning was not kept private. St. Matthew's gospel was published long before that destruction, so that others might have taken the advantage of it; but their perishing through their unbelief of this, was a figure of their eternal perishing through their unbelief of the warnings Christ gave concerning the wrath to come.

[3.] Whom it would go hard with at that time (v. 19); *Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck*. To this same event that saying of Christ at his death refers (^{<223>}Luke 23:29), They shall say, *Blessed are the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck*. Happy are they that have no children to see the murder of; but most unhappy they whose wombs are then bearing, their paps then giving suck: they of all others will be in the most melancholy circumstances. *First*, To them the famine would be most grievous, when they should see the *tongue of the sucking child cleaving to the roof of his mouth for thirst*, and themselves by the calamity made more cruel than the sea monsters, ^{<204>}Lamentations 4:3, 4. *Secondly*, To them the sword would be most terrible, when in the hand of worse than brutal rage. It is a direful midwifery, when the women with child come to be ripped up by the enraged conqueror (^{<256>}2 Kings 15:16; ^{<336>}Hosea 13:16; ^{<300>}Amos 1:13), or the children *brought forth to their murderer*, ^{<393>}Hosea 9:13. *Thirdly*, To them also the flight would be most afflictive; the women with child cannot make haste, or go far; the sucking child cannot be left behind, or, if it should, *can a woman forget it, that she should not have compassion on it?* If it be carried along, it retards the mother's flight, and so exposes her life, and is in danger of Mephibosheth's fate, who was lamed by a fall he got in his nurse's flight. ^{<1004>}2 Samuel 4:4.

[4.] What they should pray against at that time — *that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath day*, v. 20. Observe, in general, it becomes Christ's disciples, in times of public trouble and calamity, to be much in prayer; that is a salve for every sore, never out of season, but in a special manner seasonable when we are distressed on every side. There is no remedy but you must flee, the decree is gone forth, so that God will not be entreated to take away his wrath, no, not if *Noah, Daniel, and Job, stood before him*. *Let it suffice thee, speak no more of that matter*, but labour to make the best of that which is; and when you cannot in faith pray that you may not be forced to flee, yet pray that the circumstances of it may be graciously ordered, that, though the cup may not pass from you, yet the extremity of the judgment may be prevented. Note, God has the disposing

of the circumstances of events, which sometimes make a great alteration one way or other; and therefore in those our eyes must be ever toward him. Christ's bidding them pray for this favour, intimates his purpose of granting it to them; and in a general calamity we must not overlook a circumstantial kindness, but see and own wherein it might have been worse. Christ still bids his disciples to pray for themselves and their friends, that, whenever they were forced to flee, it might be in the most convenient time. Note, When trouble is in prospect, at a great distance, it is good to lay in a stock of prayers beforehand; they must pray, *First, That their flight*, if it were the will of God, *might not be in the winter*, when the days are short, the weather cold, the ways dirty, and therefore travelling very uncomfortable, especially for whole families. Paul hastens Timothy to come to him before winter, ^{STUD-2} 2 Timothy 4:21. Note, Though the ease of the body is not to be *mainly* consulted, it ought to be *duly* considered; though we must take what God sends, and when he sends it, yet we may pray against bodily inconveniences, and are encouraged to do so, in that *the Lord is for the body*. *Secondly*, That it might not be *on the sabbath day*; not on the Jewish sabbath, because travelling then would give offence to them who were angry with the disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the day; not on the Christian sabbath, because being forced to travel on the day would be a grief to themselves. This intimates Christ's design, that a weekly sabbath should be observed in his church after the preaching of the gospel to all the world. We read not of any of the ordinances of the Jewish church, which were purely ceremonial, that Christ ever expressed any care about, because they were all to vanish; but for the sabbath he often showed a concern. It intimates likewise that the sabbath is ordinarily to be observed as a day of rest from travel and worldly labour; but that, according to his own explication of the fourth commandment, works of necessity were lawful on the sabbath day, as this of fleeing from an enemy to save our lives: had it not been lawful, he would have said, "Whatever becomes of you, do not flee on the sabbath day, but abide by it, though you die by it." For we must not commit the least sin, to escape the greatest trouble. But it intimates, likewise, that it is very uneasy and uncomfortable to a good man, to be taken off by any work of necessity from the solemn service and worship of God on the sabbath day. We should pray that we may have quiet undisturbed sabbaths, and may have no other work than sabbath work to do on sabbath days; that we may attend upon the Lord without distraction. It was desirable, that, if they must flee, they might have the benefit and comfort of one sabbath more to help to bear their

charges. To flee in the winter is uncomfortable to the body; but to flee on the sabbath day is so to the soul, and the more so when it remembers former sabbaths, as ^{<304>}Psalm 42:4.

3. The greatness of the troubles which should immediately ensue (v. 21); *Then shall be great tribulation*; then when the measure of iniquity is full; then when the servants of God are sealed and secured, then come the troubles; nothing can be done against Sodom till Lot is entered into Zoar, and then look for fire and brimstone immediately. *There shall be great tribulation*. Great, indeed, when within the city plague and famine raged, and (worse than either) faction and division, so that every man's sword was against his fellow; then and there it was that the hands of the pitiful women flayed their own children. Without the city was the Roman army ready to swallow them up, with a particular rage against them, not only as Jews, but as rebellious Jews. War was the only one of the three sore judgments that David excepted against; but that was it by which the Jews were ruined; and there were famine and pestilence in extremity besides. Josephus's *History of the Wars of the Jews*, has in it more tragical passages than perhaps any history whatsoever.

(1.) It was a desolation unparalleled, such as *was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be*. Many a city and kingdom has been made desolate, but never any with a desolation like this. Let not daring sinners think that God has done his worst, he can heat the furnace seven times and yet seven times hotter, and will, when he sees greater and still greater abominations. The Romans, when they destroyed Jerusalem, were degenerated from the honour and virtue of their ancestors, which had made even their victories easy to the vanquished. And the wilfulness and obstinacy of the Jews themselves contributed much to the increase of the tribulation. No wonder that the ruin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled ruin, when the sin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled sin — even their crucifying Christ. The nearer any people are to God in profession and privileges, the greater and heavier will his judgments be upon them, if they abuse those privileges, and be false to that profession, ^{<305>}Amos 3:2.

(2.) It was a desolation which, if it should continue long, would be intolerable, so that *no flesh should be saved*, v. 22. So triumphantly would death ride, in so many dismal shapes, and with such attendants, that there would be no escaping, but, first or last, all would be cut off. He that escaped one sword, would fall by another, ^{<306>}Isaiah 24:17, 18. The

computation which Josephus makes of those that were slain in several places, amounts to above two millions. *No flesh shall be saved*; he doth not say, “No *soul* shall be saved,” for the destruction of the flesh may be for *the saving of the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus*; but temporal lives will be sacrificed so profusely, that one would think, if it last awhile, it would make a full end.

But here is one word of comfort in the midst of all this terror — that *for the elects' sake these days shall be shortened*, not made shorter than what God had determined (for *that which is determined, shall be poured upon the desolate*, ²⁰⁰⁷Daniel 9:27), but shorter than what he might have decreed, if he had dealt with them according to their sins; shorter than what the enemy designed, who would have cut all off, if God who made use of them to serve his own purpose, had not set bounds to their wrath; shorter than one who judged by human probabilities would have imagined. Note,

[1.] In times of common calamity God manifests his favour to the elect remnant; his jewels, which he will then make up; his peculiar treasure, which he will secure when the lumber is abandoned to the spoiler.

[2.] The shortening of calamities is a kindness God often grants for the elects' sake. Instead of complaining that our afflictions last so long, if we consider our defects, we shall see reason to be thankful that they do not last always; when it is bad with us, it becomes us to say, “Blessed be God that it is no worse; blessed be God that it is not hell, endless and remediless misery.” It was a lamenting church that said, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*; and it is for the sake of the elect, lest their spirit should fail before them, if he should contend for ever, and lest they should be tempted to put forth, if not their heart, yet their hand, to iniquity.

And now comes in the repeated caution, which was opened before, to take heed of being ensnared by false Christs, and false prophets; (v. 23, etc.), who would promise them deliverance, as the lying prophets in Jeremiah's time (²⁴⁴³Jeremiah 14:13; 23:16, 17; 27:16; 28:2), but would delude them. Times of great trouble are times of great temptation, and therefore we have need to double our guard then. If they shall say, *Here is a Christ, or there is one*, that shall deliver us from the Romans, do not heed them, it is all but talk; such a deliverance is not to be expected, and therefore not such a deliverer.

VII. He foretels the sudden spreading of the gospel in the world, about the time of these great events (v. 27, 28); *As the lightning comes out of the east, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.* It comes in here as an antidote against the poison of those seducers, that said, *Lo, here is Christ,* or, *Lo, he is there;* compare ^{<4073>}Luke 17:23, 24. Harken not to them, for the coming of the Son of man will be as the lightning.

1. It seems primarily to be meant of his coming to set up his spiritual kingdom in the world; where the gospel came in its light and power, there the Son of man came, and in a way quite contrary to the fashion of the seducers and false Christs, who came creeping *in the desert,* or the *secret chambers* (^{<5186>}2 Timothy 3:6); whereas Christ comes not with such a *spirit of fear,* but of *power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* The gospel would be remarkable for two things.

(1.) Its swift spreading; it shall fly as the lightning; so shall the gospel be preached and propagated. The gospel is light (^{<4189>}John 3:19); and it is not in this as the lightning, that it is a sudden flash, and away, for it is sun-light, and day-light; but it is as lightning in these respects:

[1.] It is light from heaven, as the lightning. It is God, and not man, that sends the lightnings, and summons them, that they may go, and say, *Here we are,* ^{<4385>}Job 38:35. It is God that directs it (^{<4373>}Job 37:3); to man it is one of nature's miracles, above his power to effect, and of nature's mysteries, above his skill to account for: but it is from above; *his lightnings enlightened the world,* ^{<4974>}Psalms 97:4.

[2.] It is visible and conspicuous as the lightning. The seducers carried on their depths of Satan in the desert and the secret chambers, shunning the light; heretics were called *lucifugae* — *light-shunners.* But truth seeks no corners, however it may sometimes be forced into them, as the *woman in the wilderness,* though *clothed with the sun,* ^{<6211>}Revelation 12:1, 6. Christ preached his gospel openly (^{<4980>}John 18:20), and his apostles on *the housetop* (ch. 10:27), not *in a corner,* ^{<4026>}Acts 26:26. See ^{<4980>}Psalms 98:2.

[3.] It was sudden and surprising to the world as the lightning; the Jews indeed had predictions of it, but to the Gentiles it was altogether unlooked for, and came upon them with unaccountable energy, or ever they were aware. It was *light out of darkness,* ^{<4046>}Matthew 4:16; ^{<4046>}2 Corinthians 4:6. We read of the discomfiting of armies by lightning, ^{<1215>}2 Samuel 22:15;

^{<436>}Psalm 144:6. The powers of darkness were dispersed and vanquished by the gospel lightning.

[4.] It spread far and wide, and that quickly and irresistibly, like the lightning, which comes, suppose, out of the east (Christ is said to ascend *from the east*, ^{<610>}Revelation 7:2; ^{<230>}Isaiah 41:2), and lighteneth to the west. The propagating of Christianity to so many distant countries, of divers languages, by such unlikely instruments, destitute of all secular advantages, and in the face of so much opposition, and this in so short a time, was one of the greatest miracles that was ever wrought for the confirmation of it; here was Christ upon his white horse, denoting speed as well as strength, and *going on conquering and to conquer*, ^{<610>}Revelation 6:2. Gospel light rose with the sun, and went with the same, so that the beams of it reached to the ends of the earth, ^{<610>}Romans 10:18. Compare with ^{<900>}Psalm 19:3, 4. Though it was fought against, it could never be cooped up in a desert, or in a secret place, as the seducers were; but by this, according to Gamaliel's rule, proved itself to be *of God*, that it *could not be overthrown*, ^{<450>}Acts 5:38, 39. Christ speaks of *shining into the west*, because it spread most effectually into those countries which lay west from Jerusalem, as Mr. Herbert observes in his *Church-militant*. How soon did the gospel lightning reach this island of Great Britain! Tertullian, who wrote in the second century, takes notice of it, *Britannorum in accessa Romanis loca, Christo tamen subdita — The fastnesses of Britain, though inaccessible to the Romans, were occupied by Jesus Christ*. This was the Lord's doing.

(2.) Another thing remarkable concerning the gospel, was, its strange success in those places to which it was spread; it gathered in multitudes, not by external compulsion, but as it were by such a natural instinct and inclination, as brings the birds of prey to their prey; for *wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together* (v. 28), where Christ is preached, souls will be gathered in to him. The *lifting up of Christ from the earth*, that is, the preaching of Christ crucified, which, one would think, should drive all men from him, will *draw all men to him* (^{<810>}John 12:32), according to Jacob's prophecy, that *to him shall the gathering of the people be*, ^{<490>}Genesis 49:10. See ^{<200>}Isaiah 60:8. The eagles will be where the carcase is, for it is food for them, it is a feast for them; *where the slain are, there is she*, ^{<300>}Job 39:30. Eagles are said to have a strange sagacity and quickness of scent to find out the prey, and they fly swiftly to it, ^{<810>}Job 9:26. So those whose spirits God shall stir up, will be effectually

drawn to Jesus Christ, to feed upon him; whither should the eagle go but to the prey? Whither should the soul go but to Jesus Christ, who *has the words of eternal life*? The eagles will distinguish what is proper for them from that which is not; so those who have spiritual senses exercised, will know the voice of the good Shepherd from that of a thief and a robber. Saints will be where the true Christ is, not the false Christs. This is applicable to the desires that are wrought in every gracious soul after Christ, and communion with him. Where he is in his ordinances, there will his servants choose to be. A living principle of grace is a kind of natural instinct in all the saints, drawing them to Christ to live upon him.

2. Some understand these verses of the coming of the Son of man *to destroy Jerusalem*, ^{<391>}Malachi 3:1, 2, 5. So much was there of an extraordinary display of divine power and justice in that event, that it is called *the coming of Christ*.

Now here are two things intimated concerning it.

(1.) That to the most it would be as unexpected as a flash of lightning, which indeed gives warning of the clap of thunder which follows, but is itself surprising. The seducers say, *Lo, here is Christ* to deliver us; or there is one, a creature of their own fancies; but ere they are aware, the wrath of the Lamb, the true Christ, will arrest them, and they shall not escape.

(2.) That it might be as justly expected as that the eagle should fly to the carcasses; though they put far from them the evil day, yet the desolation will come as certainly as the birds of prey to a dead carcass, that lies exposed in the open field.

[1.] The Jews were so corrupt and degenerate, so vile and vicious, that they were become a carcass, obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God; they were also so factious and seditious, and every way so provoking to the Romans, that they had made themselves obnoxious to their resentments, and an inviting prey to them.

[2.] The Romans were as an eagle, and the ensign of their armies was an eagle. The army of the Chaldeans is said *to fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat*, ^{<318>}Habakkuk 1:8. The ruin of the New-Testament Babylon is represented by a call to the birds of prey to come and feast upon the slain, ^{<67>}Revelation 19:17, 18. Notorious malefactors have their eyes eaten out

by *the young eagles* (^{<2017>}Proverbs 30:17); the Jews were hung up in chains, ^{<2013>}Jeremiah 7:33; 16:4.

[3.] The Jews can no more preserve themselves from the Romans than the carcass can secure itself from the eagles.

[4.] The destruction shall find out the Jews wherever they are, as the eagle scents the prey. Note, When a people do by their sin make themselves carcasses, putrid and loathsome, nothing can be expected but that God should send eagles among them, to devour and destroy them.

3. It is very applicable to the day of judgment, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, and *our gathering together unto him*, ^{<2012>}Thessalonians 2:1. Now see here,

(1.) How he shall come; *as the lightning*, The time was now at hand, when he should *depart out of the world, to go to the Father*. Therefore those that enquire after Christ must not go into the desert or the secret place, nor listen to every one that will put up the finger to invite them to a sight of Christ; but let them look upward, for the heavens must contain him, and thence *we look for the Saviour* (^{<2010>}Philippians 3:20); he shall *come in the clouds*, as the lightning doth, and *every eye shall see him*, as they say it is natural for all living creatures to turn their faces towards the lightning, ^{<2011>}Revelation 1:7. Christ will appear to all the world, from one end of heaven to the other; nor shall any thing be hid from the light and heat of that day.

(2.) How the saints shall be gathered to him; as the eagles are to the carcass by natural instinct, and with the greatest swiftness and alacrity imaginable. Saints, when they shall be fetched to glory, will be carried as on eagles' wings (^{<2014>}Exodus 19:4), as on angels' wings. *They shall mount up with wings, like eagles*, and like them renew their youth.

VIII. He foretels his second coming at the *end of time*, v. 29-31. *The sun shall be darkened*, etc.

1. Some think this is to be understood only of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation; the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, denotes the eclipse of the glory of that state, its convulsions, and the general confusion that attended that desolation. Great slaughter and devastation are in the Old Testament thus set forth (as ^{<2010>}Isaiah 13:10; 34:4; ^{<2011>}Ezekiel 32:7; ^{<2012>}Joel 2:31); or by the sun, moon, and stars, may be

meant the temple, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, which should all come to ruin. The *sign of the Son of man* (v. 30) means a signal appearance of the power and justice of the Lord Jesus in it, avenging his own blood on them that imprecated the guilt of it upon themselves and their children; and the gathering *of his elect* (v. 31) signifies the delivering of a remnant from this sin and ruin.

2. It seems rather to refer to Christ's second coming. The destruction of the particular enemies of the church was typical of the complete conquest of them all; and therefore what will be done really at the great day, may be applied metaphorically to those destructions: but still we must attend to the principal scope of them; and while we are all agreed to expect Christ's second coming, what need is there to put such strained constructions as some do, upon these verses, which speak of it so clearly, and so agreeably to other scriptures, especially when Christ is here answering an enquiry concerning his coming at the end of the world, which Christ was never shy of speaking of to his disciples?

The only objection against this, is, that it is said to be *immediately after the tribulation of those days*; but as to that,

(1.) It is usual in the prophetic style to speak of things great and certain as near and just at hand, only to express the greatness and certainty of them. Enoch spoke of Christ's second coming as within ken, *Behold, the Lord cometh*, ^{<III>}Jude 1:14.

(2.) *A thousand years are in God's sight but as one day*, ^{<IX>}2 Peter 3:8. It is there urged, with reference to this very thing, and so it might be said to be immediately after. The tribulation of those days includes not only the destruction of Jerusalem, but all the other tribulations which the church must pass through; not only its share in the calamities of the nations, but the tribulations peculiar to itself; while the nations are torn with wars, and the church with schisms, delusions, and persecutions, we cannot say that the tribulation of those days is over; the whole state of the church on earth is militant, we must count upon that; but when the church's tribulation is over, her warfare accomplished, and what is behind of the sufferings of Christ filled up, then look for the end.

Now concerning Christ's second coming, it is here foretold,

[1.] That there shall be then a great and amazing change of the creatures, and particularly the *heavenly bodies* (v. 29). *The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.* The moon shines with a borrowed light, and therefore if the sun, from whom she borrows her light, is turned into darkness, she must fail of course, and become bankrupt. *The stars shall fall;* they shall lose their light, and disappear, and be as if they were fallen; and *the powers of heaven shall be shaken.* This intimates,

First, That there shall be a great change, in order to the making of all things new. Then shall be *the restitution of all things*, when the heavens shall not be cast away as a rag, but *changed as a vesture*, to be worn in a better fashion, ^{<B26>}Psalm 102:26. They shall *pass away with a great noise*, that there may be *new heavens*, ^{<B10>}2 Peter 3:10-13.

Secondly, It shall be a visible change, and such as all the world must take notice of; for such the darkening of the sun and moon cannot but be: and it would be an amazing change; for the heavenly bodies are not so liable to alteration as the creatures of this lower world are. The days of heaven, and the continuance of the sun and moon, are used to express that which is lasting and unchangeable (As ^{<B29>}Psalm 89:29; 36:37); yet they shall thus be shaken.

Thirdly, It shall be a universal change. If the sun be turned into darkness, and the powers of heaven be shaken, the earth cannot but be turned into a dungeon, and its foundation made to tremble. *Howl, fir trees, if the cedars be shaken.* When the stars of heaven drop, no marvel if the *everlasting mountains melt*, and the *perpetual hills bow*. Nature shall sustain a general shock and convulsion, which yet shall be no hindrance to the joy and rejoicing of heaven and earth *before the Lord, when he cometh to judge the world* (^{<B11>}Psalm 96:11, 13); they shall as it were *glory in the tribulation*.

Fourthly, The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, which were *made to rule over the day, and over the night* (which is the first dominion we find of any creature, ^{<B16>}Genesis 1:16-18), signifies the *putting down of all rule, authority, and power* (even that which seems of the greatest antiquity and usefulness), *that the kingdom may be delivered up to God, even the Father*, and he may be *All in all*, ^{<B24>}1 Corinthians 15:24, 28. The sun was darkened at the death of Christ, for then was in one sense *the judgment of this world* (^{<B23>}John 12:31), an indication of what would be at the general judgment.

Fifthly, The glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus, who will then show himself as the *Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person*, will darken the sun and moon, as a candle is darkened in the beams of the noon-day sun; they will have no glory, *by reason of the glory that excelleth*, ^{<408>}2 Corinthians 3:10. Then *the sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded*, when God shall appear, ^{<292>}Isaiah 24:23.

Sixthly, The sun and moon shall be then darkened, because there will be no more occasion for them. To sinners, that choose their portion in this life, all comfort will be eternally denied; as they shall not have a drop of water, so not a ray of light. Now God causeth his sun to rise on the earth, but then *Interdico tib sole et luna — I forbid thee the light of the sun and the moon*. Darkness must be their portion. To the saints that had their treasure above, such light of joy and comfort will be given as shall supersede that of the sun and moon, and render it useless. What need is there of vessels of light, when we come to *the Fountain and Father of light*? See ^{<209>}Isaiah 60:19; ^{<425>}Revelation 22:5.

[2.] That *then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven* (v. 30), the Son of man himself, as it follows here, *They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds*. At his first coming, he was *set for a Sign that should be spoken against* (^{<424>}Luke 2:34), but at his second coming, a sign that should be admired. Ezekiel was *a son of man set for a sign*, ^{<316>}Ezekiel 12:6. Some make this a prediction of the harbingers and forerunners of his coming, giving notice of his approach; *a light shining before him, and the fire devouring* (^{<180>}Psalms 50:3; ^{<191>}1 Kings 19:11, 12), *the beams coming out of his hand, where had long been the hiding of his power*, ^{<304>}Habakkuk 3:4. It is a groundless conceit of some of the ancients, that this sign of the Son of man, will be the sign of the cross displayed as a banner. It will certainly be such a clear convincing sign as will dash infidelity quite out of countenance, and fill their faces with shame, who said, *Where is the promise of his coming?*

[3.] That *then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn*, v. 30. See ^{<407>}Revelation 1:7. *All the kindreds of the earth shall then wail because of him*; some of all the tribes and kindreds of the earth shall mourn; for the greater part will tremble at his approach, while the chosen remnant, one of a family and two of a tribe, shall lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, and their Redeemer. Note, Sooner or later, all sinners will be mourners; penitent sinners look to Christ, and mourn

after a godly sort; and they who sow in those tears, shall shortly reap in joy; impenitent sinners *shall look unto him whom they have pierced*, and, though they laugh now, shall mourn and weep after a devilish sort, in endless horror and despair.

[4.] That *then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*. Note, *First*, The judgment of the great day will be committed to the Son of man, both in pursuance and in recompence of his great undertaking for us as Mediator, ^{<415>}John 5:22, 27. *Secondly*, The Son of man will at that day come in the clouds of heaven. Much of the sensible intercourse between heaven and earth is by the clouds; they are betwixt them, as it were, the *medium participationis* — *the medium of participation*, drawn by heaven from the earth, distilled by heaven upon the earth. Christ went to heaven in a cloud, and *will in like manner come again*, ^{<410>}Acts 1:9, 11. *Behold, he cometh in the clouds*, ^{<411>}Revelation 1:7. A cloud will be the Judge's chariot (^{<414>}Psalm 104:3), his robe (^{<410>}Revelation 10:1), his pavilion (^{<411>}Psalm 18:11), his throne, ^{<414>}Revelation 14:14. When the world was destroyed by water, the judgment came in the clouds of heaven, for the windows of heaven were opened; so shall it be when it shall be destroyed by fire. Christ went before Israel in a cloud, which had a bright side and a dark side; so will the cloud have in which Christ will come at the great day, it will bring both comfort and terror. *Thirdly*, He will *come with power and great glory*: his first coming was in weakness and great meanness (^{<413>}2 Corinthians 13:4); but his second coming will be with power and glory, agreeable both to the dignity of his person and to the purposes of his coming. *Fourthly*, He will be seen with bodily eyes in his coming: *therefore* the Son of man will be the Judge, that he may be seen, that sinners thereby may be the more confounded, who shall see him as Balaam did, *but not nigh* (^{<417>}Numbers 24:17), see him, but not as theirs. It added to the torment of that damned sinner, that *he saw Abraham afar off*. "Is this he whom we have slighted, and rejected, and rebelled against; whom we have crucified to ourselves afresh; who might have been our Saviour, but is our Judge, and will be our enemy for ever?" *The Desire of all nations* will then be their dread.

[5.] That *he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet*, v. 31. Note, *First*, The angels shall be attendants upon Christ at his second coming; they are called *his* angels, which proves him to be God, and Lord of the angels; they shall be obliged to wait upon him. *Secondly*, These attendants shall be employed by him as officers of the court in the

judgment of that day; they are now ministering spirits sent forth by him (^{<3014>}Hebrews 1:14), and will be so then. *Thirdly*, Their ministration will be ushered in with a great sound of a trumpet, to awaken and alarm a sleeping world. This trumpet is spoken of, ^{<4152>}1 Corinthians 15:52, and ^{<5046>}1 Thessalonians 4:16. At the giving of the law on mount Sinai, the sound of the trumpet was remarkably terrible (^{<0293>}Exodus 19:13, 16); but much more will it be so in the great day. By the law, trumpets were to be sounded for the calling of assemblies (^{<0402>}Numbers 10:2), in praising God (^{<3303>}Psalms 81:3), in offering sacrifices (^{<0400>}Numbers 10:10), and in proclaiming the year of jubilee, ^{<0259>}Leviticus 25:9. Very fitly therefore shall there be the sound of a trumpet at the last day, when the general assembly shall be called, when the praises of God shall be gloriously celebrated, when sinners shall fall as sacrifices to divine justice, and when the saints shall enter upon their eternal jubilee.

[6.] That *they shall gather together his elect from the four winds*. Note, At the second coming of Jesus Christ, there will be a general meeting of all the saints. *First*, The *elect* only will be gathered, the chosen remnant, who are but few in comparison with the many that are only *called*. This is the foundation of the saints' eternal happiness, that they are God's elect. The gifts of love to eternity follow the thought of love from eternity; and *the Lord knows them that are his*. *Secondly*, The angels shall be employed to bring them together, as Christ's servants, and as the saints' friends; we have the commission given them, ^{<0505>}Psalms 50:5 *Gather my saints together unto me*; nay, it will be said to them, *Habetis fratres — These are your brethren*; for the elect will then *be equal to the angels*, ^{<0236>}Luke 20:36. *Thirdly*, *They shall be gathered from one end of heaven to the other*; the elect of God are scattered abroad (^{<4152>}John 11:52), there are some in all places, in all nations (^{<0609>}Revelation 7:9); but when that great gathering day comes, there shall not one of them be missing; distance of place shall keep none out of heaven, if distance of affection do not. *Undique ad coelos tantundem est viae — Heaven is equally accessible from every place*. See ^{<4081>}Matthew 8:11; ^{<2406>}Isaiah 43:6; 49:12.

⌄263 MATTHEW 24:32-51

THE DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS

We have here the practical application of the foregoing prediction; in general, we must expect and prepare for the events here foretold.

I. We must expect them; “*Now learn a parable of the fig-tree*, v. 32, 33. Now learn what use to make of the things you have heard; so observe and understand the signs of the times, and compare them with the predictions of the word, as from thence to foresee what is at the door, that you may provide accordingly.” The parable of the fig-tree is no more than this, that its budding and blossoming are a presage of summer; for as the *stork* in the heaven, so the trees of the field, *know their appointed time*. The beginning of the working of second causes assures us of the progress and perfection of it. Thus when God begins to fulfil prophecies, he will make an end. There is a certain series in the works of providence, as there is in the works of nature. The signs of the times are compared with the prognostics of *the face of the sky* (⌄163 Matthew 16:3), so here with those of *the face of the earth*; when that is renewed, we foresee that summer is coming, not immediately, but at some distance; after *the branch grows tender*, we expect the March winds, and the April showers, before the summer comes; however, we are sure it is coming; “so likewise ye, when the gospel day shall dawn, count upon it, that through this variety of events which I have told you of, the perfect day will come. *The things revealed must shortly come to pass* (⌄603 Revelation 1:1); they must come in their own order, in the order appointed for them. *Know that it is near.*” He does not here say what, but it is that which the hearts of his disciples are upon, and which they are inquisitive after, and long for; *the kingdom of God is near*, so it is expressed in the parallel place, ⌄213 Luke 21:31. Note, When the trees of righteousness begin to bud and blossom, when God's people promise faithfulness, it is a happy presage of good times. In them God begins his work, first prepares their heart, and then he will go on with it; for, *as for God, his work is perfect*; and he will *revive it in the midst of their years*.

Now touching the events foretold here, which we are to expect,

1. Christ here assures us of the certainty of them (v. 35); *Heaven and earth shall pass away*; they continue this day indeed, according to God's ordinance, but they shall not continue for ever (¹⁰²Psalm 102:25, 26; ¹⁰²Peter 3:10); *but my words shall not pass away*. Note, The word of Christ is more sure and lasting than heaven and earth. *Hath he spoken? And shall he not do it?* We may build with more assurance upon the word of Christ than we can upon the pillars of heaven, or the strong foundations of the earth; for, when they shall be made to tremble and totter, and shall be no more, the word of Christ shall remain, and be in full force, power, and virtue. See ¹⁰²1 Peter 1:24, 25. *It is easier for heaven and earth to pass,* than the word of Christ; so it is expressed, ¹⁶⁷Luke 16:17. Compare ²⁵⁴Isaiah 54:10. The accomplishment of these prophecies might seem to be delayed, and intervening events might seem to disagree with them, but do not think that therefore the word of Christ is fallen to the ground, for that shall never pass away: though it be not fulfilled, either in the time or in the way that we have prescribed; yet, in God's time, which is the best time, and in God's way, which is the best way, it shall certainly be fulfilled. Every word of Christ is very pure, and therefore very sure.

2. He here instructs us as to the time of them, v. 34, 36. As to this, it is well observed by the learned Grotius, that there is a manifest distinction made between the *tauta* (v. 34), and the *ekeine* (v. 36), *these things*, and *that day and hour*; which will help to clear this prophecy.

(1.) As to *these things*, the wars, seductions, and persecutions, here foretold, and especially the ruin of the Jewish nation; “*This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled* (v. 34); there are those now alive, that shall see Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jewish church brought to an end.” Because it might seem strange, he backs it with a solemn asseveration; “*Verily, I say unto you. You may take my word for it, these things are at the door.*” Christ often speaks of the nearness of that desolation, the more to affect people, and quicken them to prepare for it. Note, There may be greater trials and troubles yet before us, in our own day, than we are aware of. They that are old, know not what sons of Anak may be reserved for their last encounters.

(2.) But as to *that day and hour* which will put a period to time, *that knoweth no man*, v. 36. Therefore take heed of confounding these two, as *they did*, who, from the words of Christ and the apostles; letters, inferred that *the day of Christ was at hand*, ³⁸²2 Thessalonians 2:2. No, it was not;

this generation, and many another, shall pass, before that day and hour come. Note,

[1.] There is a certain day and hour fixed for the judgment to come; it is called *the day of the Lord*, because so unalterably fixed. None of God's judgments are adjourned *sine die* — *without the appointment of a certain day*.

[2.] That day and hour are a great secret.

*Prudens futuri temporis exitum
Caliginosa nocte premit Deus.*

*But Heaven has wisely hid from human sight
The dark decrees of future fate,
And sown their seeds in depth of nights. — Horace.*

No man knows it; not the wisest by their sagacity, not the best by any divine discovery. We all know that there shall be such a day; but none knows when it shall be, no, not the angels; though their capacities for knowledge are great, and their opportunities of knowing this advantageous (they dwell at the fountain-head of light), and though they are to be employed in the solemnity of that day, yet they are not told when it shall be: none *knows but my Father only*. This is one of those *secret things* which *belong to the Lord our God*. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming, is, to those who are watchful, *a savour of life unto life*, and makes them more watchful; but to those who are careless, it is *a savour of death unto death*, and makes them more careless.

II. To this end we must expect these events, that we may prepare for them; and here we have a caution against security and sensuality, which will make it a dismal day indeed to us, v. 37-41. In these verses we have such an idea given us of the judgment day, as may serve to startle and awaken us, that we may not sleep as others do.

It will be a surprising day, and a separating day.

1. It will be a surprising day, as the deluge was to the old world, v. 37-39. That which he here intends to describe, is, the posture of the world at the coming of the Son of man; besides his first coming, to save, he has other comings to judge. He saith (~~418~~ John 9:39), *For judgment I am come*; and for judgment he will come; for all judgment is committed to him, both that of the word, and that of the sword.

Now this here is applicable,

(1.) To *temporal judgments*, particularly that which was now hastening upon the nation and people of the Jews; though they had fair warning given them of it, and there were many prodigies that were presages of it, yet it found them secure, crying, *Peace and safety*, ^{<GRB>}1 Thessalonians 5:3. The siege was laid to Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, when they were met at the passover in the midst of their mirth; like the men of Laish, they dwelt careless when the ruin arrested them, ^{<GRB>}Judges 18:7, 27. The destruction of Babylon, both that in the Old Testament and that in the New, comes when she saith, *I shall be a lady for ever*, ^{<GRB>}Isaiah 47:7-9; ^{<GRB>}Revelation 18:7. Therefore the plagues come in a moment, in one day. Note, Men's unbelief shall not make God's threatenings of no effect.

(2.) To *the eternal judgment*; so the judgment of the great day is called, ^{<GRB>}Hebrews 6:2. Though notice has been given of it from Enoch, yet, when it comes, it will be unlooked for by the most of men; the latter days, which are nearest to that day, will produce scoffers, that say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* ^{<GRB>}2 Peter 3:3, 4; ^{<GRB>}Luke 18:8. Thus it will be when the world that now is shall be destroyed by fire; for thus it was when the old world, being overflowed by water, perished, ^{<GRB>}2 Peter 3:6, 7. Now Christ here shows what were the temper and posture of the old world when the deluge came.

[1.] They were sensual and worldly; *they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*. It is not said, They were killing and stealing, and whoring and swearing (these were indeed the horrid crimes of some of the worst of them; *the earth was full of violence*); but they were all of them, except Noah, over head and ears in the world, and regardless of the word of God, and this ruined them. Note, Universal neglect of religion is a more dangerous symptom to any people than particular instances here and there of daring irreligion. *Eating and drinking* are necessary to the preservation of man's life; *marrying and giving in marriage* are necessary to the preservation of mankind; but, *Licetis perimus omnes* — *These lawful things undo us*, unlawfully managed. *First*, They were unreasonable in it, inordinate and entire in the pursuit of the delights of sense, and the gains of the world; they were wholly taken up with these things, *esan trogontes* — *they were eating*; they were in these things as in their element, as if they had their being for no other end than *to eat and drink*, ^{<GRB>}Isaiah 56:12. *Secondly*, They were unreasonable in it;

they were entire and intent upon the world and the flesh, when the destruction was at the door, which they had had such fair warning of. They were eating and drinking, when they should have been repenting and praying; when God, by the ministry of Noah, called to *weeping and mourning, then joy and gladness*. This was to them, as it was to Israel afterwards, the unpardonable sin (^{237D}Isaiah 22:12, 14), especially, because it was in defiance of those warnings by which they should have been awakened. “*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; if it must be a short life, let it be a merry one.*” The apostle James speaks of this as the general practice of the wealthy Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem; when they should have been *weeping for the miseries that were coming upon them, they were living in pleasure, and nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter*, ^{381E}James 5:1, 5.

[2.] They were secure and careless; *they knew not, until the flood came*, v. 39. *Knew not!* Surely they could not but know. Did not God, by Noah, give them fair warning of it? Did he not call them to repentance, while his long-suffering waited? ^{408E}1 Peter 3:19, 20. But they knew not, that is, they believed not; they might have known, but would not know. Note, What we know of *the things that belong to our everlasting peace*, if we do not mix faith with it, and improve it, is all one as if we did not know it at all. Their *not knowing* is joined with their *eating, and drinking, and marrying*; for, *First, Therefore* they were sensual, because they were secure. Note, the reason why people are so eager in the pursuit, and so entangled in the pleasures of this world, is, because they do not know, and believe, and consider, the eternity which they are upon the brink of. Did we know aright that all these things must shortly be dissolved, and we must certainly survive them, we should not set our eyes and hearts so much upon them as we do. *Secondly, Therefore* they were secure, because they were sensual; *therefore* they knew not that the flood was coming, because they were eating and drinking; were so taken up with things seen and present, that they had neither time nor heart to mind the things not seen as yet, which they were warned of. Note, As security bolsters men up in their brutal sensuality; so sensuality rocks them asleep in their carnal security. *The knew not, until the flood came.*

1. The flood did come, though they would not foresee it. Note, Those that will not know by faith, shall be made to know by feeling, *the wrath of God revealed from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness*. The evil day is never the further off for men's putting it far off from them.

2. They did not know it till it was too late to prevent it, as they might have done if they had known it in time, which made it so much the more grievous. Judgments are most terrible and amazing to the secure, and those that have made a jest of them.

The application of this, concerning the old world, we have in these words; *So shall the coming of the Son of man be*; that is,

(1.) In such a posture shall he find people, eating and drinking, and not expecting him. Note, Security and sensuality are likely to be the epidemical diseases of the latter days. *All slumber and sleep, and at midnight the bridegroom comes*. All are off their watch, and at their ease.

(2.) With such a power, and for such a purpose, will he come upon them. As the flood took away the sinners of the old world, irresistibly and irrecoverably; so shall secure sinners, that mocked at Christ and his coming, be taken away by *the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath comes*, which will be like the coming of the deluge, a destruction which there is no fleeing from.

2. It will be a separating day (v. 40, 41); *Then shall two be in the field*. Two ways this may be applied.

(1.) We may apply it to the success of the gospel, especially at the first preaching of it; it divided the world; *some believed the things which were spoken*, and were taken to Christ; *others believed not*, and were left to perish in their unbelief. Those of the same age, place, capacity, employment, and condition, in the world, *grinding in the same mill*, those of the same family, nay, those that were joined in the same bond of marriage, were, one effectually called, the other passed by, and left in the gall of bitterness. This is that division, that separating fire, which Christ *came to send*, ^{<B129>}Luke 12:49, 51. *This renders free grace the more obliging, that it is distinguishing; to us, and not to the world* (^{<B142>}John 14:22), *nay to us, and not to those in the same field, the same mill, the same house*.

When ruin came upon Jerusalem, a distinction was made by Divine Providence, according to that which had been before made by divine grace; for all the Christians among them were saved from perishing in that calamity, by the special care of Heaven. If two were at work in the field together, and one of them was a Christian, he was taken into a place of

shelter, and had his life given him for a prey, while the other was left to the sword of the enemy. Nay, if but two women were grinding at the mill, if one of them belonged to Christ, though but a woman, a poor woman, a servant, she was taken to a place of safety, and the other abandoned. Thus *the meek of the earth are hid in the day of the Lord's anger* (^{<36B>}Zephaniah 2:3), either in heaven, or *under heaven*. Note, Distinguishing preservations, in times of general destruction, are special tokens of God's favour, and ought so to be acknowledged. If we are safe when thousands fall on our right hand and our left, are not consumed when others are consumed round about us, so that we are as brands plucked out of the fire, we have reason to say, *It is of the Lord's mercies*, and it is a great mercy.

(2.) We may apply it to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the separation which will be made in that day. He had said before (v. 31), that the elect will be *gathered together*. Here he tells us, that, in order to that, they will be distinguished from those who were nearest to them in this world; the choice and chosen ones taken to glory, the other left to perish eternally. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth, two in the same grave, their ashes mixed, shall yet arise, one to be taken to everlasting life, the other left *to shame and everlasting contempt*, ^{<71B>}Daniel 12:2. Here it is applied to them who shall be found alive. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy at their usual occupations, *in the field, at the mill*; and then, according as they are vessels of mercy prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath prepared for ruin, accordingly it will be with them; the one taken *to meet the Lord and his angels in the air, to be for ever with him and them*; the other left to the devil and his angels, who, when Christ has gathered out his own, will sweep up the residue. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. And it speaks abundance of comfort to the Lord's people.

[1.] Are they mean and despised in the world, as the man-servant in the field, or the maid at the mill (^{<21B>}Exodus 11:5)? Yet they shall not be forgotten or overlooked in that day. The poor in the world, if rich in faith, are *heirs of the kingdom*.

[2.] Are they dispersed in distant and unlikely places, where one would not expect to find the heirs of glory, *in the field, at the mill*? Yet the angels will find them there (hidden as Saul among the stuff, when they are to be enthroned), and fetch them thence; and well may they be said to be

changed, for a very great change it will be to go to heaven from ploughing and grinding.

[3.] Are they weak, and unable of themselves to move heavenward? They shall be taken, or *laid hold of*, as Lot was taken out of Sodom by a gracious violence, ^{GEN}Genesis 19:16. Those whom Christ has once apprehended and laid hold on, he will never lose his hold of.

[4.] Are they intermixed with others, linked with them in the same habitations, societies, employments? Let not that discourage any true Christian; God knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, the gold and dross in the same lump, the wheat and chaff in the same floor.

III. Here is a general exhortation to us, *to watch, and be ready* against that day comes, enforced by divers weighty considerations, v. 42, etc. Observe,

1. The duty required; *Watch, and be ready*, v. 42, 44.

(1.) *Watch therefore*, v. 42. Note, It is the great duty and interest of all the disciples of Christ to watch, to be awake and keep awake, that they may mind their business. As a sinful state or way is compared to *sleep*, senseless and inactive (^{SIMP}1 Thessalonians 5:6), so a gracious state or way is compared to *watching* and *waking*. We must watch for our Lord's coming, to us in particular at our death, *after which is the judgment*, that is *the great day* with us, the end of our time; and his coming at the end of all time to judge the world, the *great day* with all mankind. To watch implies not only to believe that our Lord will come, but to desire that he would come, to be often thinking of his coming, and always looking for it as sure and near, and the time of it uncertain. To watch for Christ's coming, is to maintain that gracious temper and disposition of mind which we should be willing that our Lord, when he comes, should find us in. To watch is to be aware of the first notices of his approach, that we may immediately attend his motions, and address ourselves to the duty of meeting him. Watching is supposed to be in the night, which is sleeping time; while we are in this world, it is *night* with us, and we must take pains to keep ourselves awake.

(2.) *Be ye also ready*. We wake in vain, if we do not get ready. It is not enough to *look* for such things; but we must therefore *give diligence*, ^{GEN}2 Peter 3:11, 14. We have then our Lord to attend upon, and we must have

our lamps ready trimmed; a cause to be tried, and we must have our plea ready drawn and signed by our Advocate; a reckoning to make up, and we must have our accounts ready stated and balanced; there is an inheritance which we then hope to enter upon, and we must have ourselves ready, made meet to partake of it, ^{<5112>}Colossians 1:12.

2. The reasons to induce us to this watchfulness and diligent preparation for that day; which are two.

(1.) Because the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain. This is the reason immediately annexed to the double exhortation (v. 42, 44); and it is illustrated by a comparison, v. 43. Let us consider then,

[1.] That *we know not what hour he will come*, v. 42. We know not *the day of our death*, ^{<1272>}Genesis 27:2. We may know that we have but *a little time to live* (*The time of my departure is at hand*, ^{<5146>}2 Timothy 4:6); but we cannot know that we have a long time to live, for our souls are continually in our hands; nor can we know how little a time we have to live, for it may prove less than we expect; much less do we know the time fixed for the general judgment. Concerning both we are kept at uncertainty, that we may, every day, expect that which may come any day; may never boast of a year's continuance (^{<5043>}James 4:13), no, nor of tomorrow's return, as if it were ours, ^{<1271>}Proverbs 27:1; ^{<1221>}Luke 12:20.

[2.] That *he may come at such an hour as we think not*, v. 44. Though there be such uncertainty in the time, there is none in the thing itself: though we know not *when* he will come, we are sure he *will* come. His parting word was, *Surely I come quickly*; his saying, "I come *surely*," obliges us to expect him: his saying "I come *quickly*," obliges us to be always expecting him; for it keeps us in a state of expectancy. *In such an hour as you think not*, that is, such an hour as they who are unready and unprepared, think not (v. 50); nay, such an hour as the most lively expectants perhaps thought least likely. The bridegroom came when the wise were slumbering. It is agreeable to our present state, that we should be under the influence of a constant and general expectation, rather than that of particular presages and prognostications, which we are sometimes tempted vainly to desire and wish for.

[3.] That the children of this world are thus wise in their generation, that, when they know of a danger approaching, they will keep awake, and stand on their guard against it. This he shows in a particular instance, v. 43. If

the master of a house had notice that a thief would come such a night, and such a watch of the night (for they divided the night into four watches, allowing three hours to each), and would make an attempt upon his house, though it were the midnight-watch, when he was most sleepy, yet he would be up, and listen to every noise in every corner, and be ready to give him a warm reception. Now, though we know not *just when* our Lord will come, yet, knowing that he *will* come, and come quickly, and without any other warning than what he hath given in his word, it concerns us to watch always. Note, *First*, We have every one of us a house to keep, which lies exposed, in which all we are worth is laid up: that house is our own souls, which we must *keep with all diligence*. *Secondly*, The day of the Lord comes *by surprise, as a thief in the night*. Christ chooses to come when he is least expected, that the triumphs of his enemies may be turned into the greater shame, and the fears of his friends into the greater joy. *Thirdly*, If Christ, when he comes, finds us asleep and unready, our house will be broken up, and we shall lose all we are worth, not as by a thief unjustly, but as by a just and legal process; death and judgment will seize upon all we have, to our irreparable damage and utter undoing. Therefore be ready, *be ye also ready*; as ready at all times as the good man of the house would be at the hour when he expected the thief: we must put on the armour of God, that we may not only stand in that evil day, but, as more than conquerors, may divide the spoil.

(2.) Because the issue of our Lord's coming will be very happy and comfortable to those that shall be found ready, but very dismal and dreadful to those that shall not, v. 45, etc. This is represented by the different state of good and bad servants, when their lord comes to reckon with them. It is likely to be well or ill with us to eternity, according as we are found ready or unready at that day; for Christ comes *to render to every man according to his works*. Now this parable, with which the chapter closes, is applicable to all Christians, who are in profession and obligation God's servants; but it seems especially intended as a warning to ministers; for the servant spoken of is a *steward*. Now observe what Christ here saith,

[1.] Concerning the *good servant*; he shows here what he is — *a ruler of the household*; what, being so, he should be — *faithful and wise*; and what, if he be so, he shall be eternally — *blessed*. Here are good instructions and encouragements to the ministers of Christ.

First, We have here his place and office. He is one *whom the Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season.* Note,

1. The church of Christ is his household, or family, standing in relation to him as the Father and Master of it. It is *the household of God*, a family named from Christ, ^{<4085>}Ephesians 3:15.

2. Gospel ministers are appointed *rulers* in this household; not at princes (Christ has entered a caveat against that), but as stewards, or other subordinate officers; not as lords, but as guides; not to prescribe new ways, but to show and lead in the ways that Christ has appointed: that is the signification of the *hegoumenoi*, which we translate, *having rule over you* (^{<5837>}Hebrews 13:17); as *overseers*, not to cut out new work, but to direct in, and quicken to, the work which Christ has ordered; that is the signification of *episkopoi* — *bishops*. They are rulers by Christ; what power they have is derived from him, and none may take it from them, or abridge it to them; he is one whom *the Lord has made ruler*; Christ has the *making* of ministers. They are rulers *under* Christ, and act in subordination to him; and rulers *for* Christ, for the advancement of his kingdom.

3. The work of gospel ministers is to give to Christ's household their meat in due season, as stewards, and therefore they have the keys delivered to them.

(1.) Their work is *to give*, not take to themselves (^{<3408>}Ezekiel 34:8), but give to the family what the Master has bought, to *dispense* what Christ has *purchased*. And to ministers it is said, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, ^{<4085>}Acts 20:35.

(2.) It is to give *meat*; not to give *law* (that is Christ's work), but to deliver those doctrines to the church which, if duly digested, will be nourishment to souls. They must give, not the poison of false doctrines, not the stones of hard and unprofitable doctrines, but the meat that is *sound* and *wholesome*.

(3.) It must be given *in due season*, *en kairo* — *while there is time for it*; when eternity comes, it will be too late; we must *work while it is day*: or *in time*, that is, whenever any opportunity offers itself; or in the stated time, time after time, according as the duty of every day requires.

Secondly, His right discharge of this office. The good servant, if thus preferred, will be a good *steward*; for,

1. He is *faithful*; stewards must be so, ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 4:2. He that is *trusted*, must be trusty; and the greater the trust is, the more is expected from them. It is a great good thing that is committed to *ministers* (^{<5114>}2 Timothy 1:14); and they must be faithful, as Moses was, ^{<380>}Hebrews 3:2. Christ counts those ministers, and those only, that are *faithful*, ^{<5112>}1 Timothy 1:12. A faithful minister of Jesus Christ is one that sincerely designs his master's honour, not his own; delivers *the whole counsel of God*, not his own fancies and conceits; follows Christ's institutions and adheres to them; regards the meanest, reproves the greatest, and doth not respect persons.

2. He is wise to understand his duty and the proper season of it; and in guiding of the flock there is need, not only of the integrity of the heart, but the skilfulness of the hands. Honesty may suffice for a good *servant*, but wisdom is necessary to a *good steward*; for it is profitable to direct.

3. He is doing; *so doing* as his office requires. The ministry is a good work, and they whose office it is, have always something to do; they must not indulge themselves in ease, nor leave the work undone, or carelessly turn it off to others, but be doing, and doing to the purpose — *so doing*, giving meat to the household, minding their own business, and not meddling with that which is foreign; *so doing* as the Master has appointed, as the office imports, and as the case of the family requires; not *talking*, but *doing*. It was the motto Mr. Perkins used, *Minister verbi es — You are a minister of the word*. Not only *Age — Be doing*; but *Hoc age — Be so doing*.

4. He is *found doing* when his Master comes; which intimates,

(1.) Constancy at his work. At what hour soever his Master comes, he is found busy at the work of the day. Ministers should not leave empty spaces in their time, lest their Lord should come in one of those empty spaces. As with a good God the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so with a good man, a good minister, the end of one duty is the beginning of another. When Calvin was persuaded to remit his ministerial labours, he answered, with some resentment, “What, would you have my Master find me idle?”

(2.) Perseverance in his work till the Lord come. *Hold fast till then,* ^{<6125>}Revelation 2:25. *Continue in these things,* ^{<5096>}1 Timothy 4:16; 6:14. Endure to the end.

Thirdly, The recompence of reward intended him for this, in three things.

1. He shall be taken notice of. This is intimated in these words, Who then is that *faithful and wise servant*? Which supposes that there are but few who answer this character; such an interpreter is *one of a thousand*, such a faithful and wise *steward*. Those who thus distinguish themselves now by humility, diligence, and sincerity in their work, Christ will in the great day both dignify and distinguish by the glory conferred on them.

2. He shall be blessed? *Blessed is that servant*; and Christ's pronouncing him blessed makes him so. All the dead that die in the Lord are blessed, ^{<6443>}Revelation 14:13. But there is a peculiar blessedness secured to them that approve themselves faithful stewards, and are found so doing. Next to the honour of those who die in the field of battle, suffering for Christ as the martyrs, is the honour of those that die in the field of service, ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, for Christ.

3. He shall be preferred (v. 47); *He shall make him ruler over all his goods*. The allusion is to the way of great men, who, if the stewards of their house conduct themselves well in that place, commonly prefer them to be the managers of their estates; thus Joseph was preferred in the house of Potiphar, ^{<1298>}Genesis 29:4, 6. But the greatest honour which the kindest master ever did to his most tried servants in this world, is nothing to that weight of glory which the Lord Jesus will confer upon his faithful watchful servants in the world to come. What is here said by a similitude, is the same that is said more plainly, ^{<8112>}John 11:26, *Him will my Father honour*. And God's servants, when thus preferred; shall be perfect in wisdom and holiness to bear that weight of glory, so that there is no danger from these servants when they reign.

[2.] Concerning the *evil* servant. Here we have,

First, His description given (v. 48, 49); where we have the wretch drawn in his own colours. The vilest of creatures is a wicked man, the vilest of

men is a wicked Christian, and the vilest of them a wicked minister. *Corruptio optimi est pessima* — *What is best, when corrupted, becomes the worst.* Wickedness in the prophets of Jerusalem is a *horrible* thing indeed, ^{<2034>}Jeremiah 23:14. Here is,

1. The cause of his wickedness; and that is, a practical disbelief of Christ's second coming; He hath *said in his heart, My Lord delays his coming*; and therefore he begins to think he will never come, but has quite forsaken his church. Observe,

(1.) Christ knows that *they* say in their hearts, who with their lips cry, *Lord, Lord*, as this servant here.

(2.) The delay of Christ's coming, though it is a gracious instance of his patience, is greatly abused by wicked people, whose hearts are thereby hardened in their wicked ways. When Christ's coming is looked upon as doubtful, or a thing at an immense distance, the hearts of *men are fully set to do evil*, ^{<2081>}Ecclesiastes 8:11. See ^{<2027>}Ezekiel 12:27. They that walk by sense, are ready to say of the unseen Jesus, as the people did of Moses when he tarried in the mount upon their errand, *We wot not what is become of him*, and therefore *up, make us gods*, the world a god, the belly a god, any thing but him that should be.

2. The particulars of his wickedness; and they are sins of the first magnitude; he is a slave to his passions and his appetites.

(1.) Persecution is here charged upon him. He begins to *smite his fellow servants*. Note,

[1.] Even the stewards of the house are to look upon all the servants of the house as their fellow servants, and therefore are forbidden to *lord it over them*. If the angel call himself *fellow servant* to John (^{<600>}Revelation 19:10), no marvel if John have learned to call himself *brother* to the Christians of the churches of Asia, ^{<610>}Revelation 1:9.

[2.] It is no new thing to see evil servants smiting their fellow servants; both private Christians and faithful ministers. He smites them, either because they reprove him, or because they will not bow, and do him reverence; will not say as he saith, and do as he doeth, against their consciences: he smites them with the tongue, as they smote the prophet, ^{<2488>}Jeremiah 18:18. And if he get power into his hand, or can

press those into his service that have, as the ten horns upon the head of the beast, it goes further. Pashur the priest smote Jeremiah, and put him in the stocks, ^{<241D>}Jeremiah 20:2. The revolvers have often been of all others most *profound to make slaughter*, ^{<38D>}Hosea 5:2. The steward, when he smites his fellow servants, does it under colour of his Master's authority, and in his name; he says, *Let the Lord be glorified* (^{<246F>}Isaiah 66:5); but he shall know that he could not put a greater affront upon his Master.

(2.) Profaneness and immorality; *He begins to eat and drink with the drunken.*

[1.] He associates with the worst of sinners, has fellowship with them, is intimate with them; he walks in their counsel, stands in their way, sits in their seat, and sings their songs. The drunken are the merry and jovial company, and those he is for, and thus he hardens them in their wickedness.

[2.] He does like them; *eats, and drinks, and is drunken*; so it is in Luke. This is an inlet to all manner of sin. Drunkenness is a leading wickedness; they who are slaves to that, are never masters of themselves in any thing else. The persecutors of God's people have commonly been the most vicious and immoral men. Persecuting consciences, whatever the pretensions be, are commonly the most profligate and debauched consciences. What will not *they* be drunk with, that will be *drunk with the blood of the saints*? Well, this is the description of a wicked minister, who yet may have the common gifts of learning and utterance above others; and, as hath been said of some, may preach so well in the pulpit, that it is a pity he should ever come out, and yet live so ill out of the pulpit, that it is a pity he should ever come in.

Secondly, His doom read, v. 50, 51. The coat and character of wicked ministers will not only not secure them from condemnation, but will greatly aggravate it. They can plead no exemption from Christ's jurisdiction, whatever they pretend to, in the church of Rome, from that of the civil magistrate; there is no benefit of clergy at Christ's bar. Observe,

1. The surprise that will accompany his doom (v. 50); *The Lord of that servant will come*. Note,

(1.) Our putting off the thoughts of Christ's coming will not put off his coming. Whatever fancy he deludes himself with, his Lord will come. The unbelief of man shall not make that great promise, or threatening (call it which you will), of no effect.

(2.) The coming of Christ will be a most dreadful surprise to secure and careless sinners, especially to wicked ministers; *He shall come in a day when he looketh not for him.* Note, Those that have slighted the warnings of the word, and silenced those of their own consciences concerning the judgment to come, cannot expect any other warnings; these will be adjudged sufficient legal notice given, whether taken or no; and no unfairness can be charged on Christ, if he come suddenly, without giving other notice. Behold, he has told us before.

2. The severity of his doom, v. 51. It is not more severe than righteous, but it is a doom that carries in it utter ruin, wrapt up in two dreadful words, *death* and *damnation*.

(1.) Death. His Lord shall *cut him asunder*, *dikotomesei auton*, “he shall cut him off from the land of the living,” from the congregation of the righteous, shall separate him unto evil; which is the definition of a *curse* (^{<620>}Deuteronomy 29:21), shall cut him down, as a tree that cumbereth the ground; perhaps it alludes to the sentence often used in the law, *That soul shall be cut off from his people*; denoting an utter extirpation. Death cuts off a good man, as a choice imp is cut off to be grafted in a better stock; but it cuts off a wicked man, as a withered branch is cut off for the fire — cuts him off from this world, which he set his heart so much upon, and was, as it were, one with. Or, as we read it, *shall cut him asunder*, that is, part body and soul, send the body to the grave to be a prey for worms, and the soul to hell to be a prey for devils, and there is the sinner cut asunder. The soul and body of a godly man at death part fairly, the one cheerfully lifted up to God, the other left to the dust; but the soul and body of a wicked man at death are cut asunder, torn asunder, for to them death is the *king of terrors*, ^{<634>}Job 18:14. The wicked servant divided himself between God and the world, Christ and Belial, his profession and his lusts, justly therefore will he thus be divided.

(2.) Damnation. He *shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites*, and a miserable portion it will be, for *there shall be weeping*. Note,

[1.] There is a place and state of everlasting misery in the other world, where there is nothing but *weeping and gnashing of teeth*; which speaks the soul's tribulation and anguish under God's indignation and wrath.

[2.] The divine sentence will appoint this place and state as the portion of those who by their own sin were fitted for it. Even he of whom he said, that he was *his* Lord, shall thus appoint him his portion. He that is now *the Saviour*, will then be *the Judge*, and the everlasting state of the children of men will be as he appoints. They that choose the world for their portion in this life, will have hell for their portion in the other life. *This is the portion of a wicked man from God,* ~~Job~~ Job 20:29.

[3.] Hell is the proper place of hypocrites. This wicked servant has *his portion with the hypocrites*. They are, as it were, the freeholders, other sinners are but as inmates with them, and have but a portion of their misery. When Christ would express the most severe punishment in the other world, he calls it *the portion of hypocrites*. If there be any place in hell hotter than other, as it is likely there is, it will be the allotment of those that have the form, but hate the power of godliness.

[4.] Wicked ministers will have their portion in the other world with the worst of sinners, even with the hypocrites, and justly, for they are the worst of hypocrites. The blood of Christ, which they have by their profaneness trampled under their feet, and the blood of souls, which they have by their unfaithfulness brought upon their heads, will bear hard upon them in that *place of torment*. *Son, remember*, will be as cutting a word to a minister if he perish as to any other sinner whatsoever. Let them therefore who preach to others, fear, lest they themselves should be cast-aways.