

Lecture 4 — The Great Tribulation.

Matt. 24: 1-44; Dan. 9: 24-27.

Behold the Bridegroom!

Ten lectures on the second coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

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The subject before us this evening is the Jew in relation to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

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

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

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

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

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

could be raised between the soul and God is settled, and the only thing we are waiting for, is the Saviour to come for us, and receive us to Himself I do not want a better prospect. You cannot give me one. That is what entrances the heart

I tell you that my Saviour may be here tonight, and that I may meet Him in the air. What can be more blessed than that? But if you do not know the Saviour, and do not possess that title, then your prospect has got nothing but clouds in it, and I am going to show you some of them. If you are an unsettled, and hesitating soul, if you do not yet know the Lord, remember, that while I speak of that which specifically relates to the Jews, it may have distinct application to you also. You will find that although the hottest bit of the furnace of tribulation may be at Jerusalem, yet the tip of the flame will touch all the world. There will be no mercy in that day for the man who has refused the Gospel. Now is the day of mercy. I recommend you to get it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 27th verse carries us up to the close, and gives us the seventieth week. Here the long interregnum of Christianity ends, and we read, "He," that is the coming Roman prince — not the Lord Jesus — "shall confirm a covenant with *the* many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (ver. 17). The Jews will be gathered back into their own land, with the temple rebuilt, the sacrifices re-established, and their old customs, feast days, and rites going on, and then they get under the protection of this western political power, that is, the revived Roman empire. A covenant is made with "*the* many," the mass of the nation; the remnant declining it, and having no part in it. "In the midst of the week" this covenant is broken. "He shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." The object of this is plain. Antichrist having effected, first of all, the complete obliteration of every remaining trace in Christendom of what was, or pretended to be, the worship of Jesus — the Christian's God — will not be content till he has driven out of the earth every testimony to Jehovah, the God of the Jew. The Lord having come for the Church, and the Holy Ghost being removed, then the mystery of iniquity works, the man of sin appears, thenceforth every vestige of what you and I are accustomed to think of as Christianity will be set aside, and then the Lord will send them a strong delusion, and they will believe a lie.

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

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

"The abomination that maketh desolate" is this: Antichrist, the beast with two horns, the simulator of Jesus, will make an image to the beast with ten horns (see Rev. 13: 11-18). He will

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

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

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

Judah, saith the Lord; and — I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it" (Jer. 30: 3).

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

I truly confess, beloved friends, that the day when I say "good-bye" to the earth, I shall say, from the bottom of my heart, Thank God. If the Lord came tonight, we should break out, as we left the earth behind, into that noble psalm, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We are going to be changed into the likeness of Christ, and to be with him for ever. Heaven, not earth, is our home. I would not be anything but a Christian for ten thousand worlds; and if you are not one, it is high time you became one.

But, with regard to the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, we read, "And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel, and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30: 4-7). The time of Jacob's trouble is the time when the Jews, regathered, will be brought under this solemn judgment of God. "For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity: and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in

measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (verses 8-11). Then in the 18th verse, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small" (verses 18, 19). Abundant other scriptures give the same testimony as to their restoration, but this one I refer to because it speaks of the time of "Jacob's trouble," and of the solemn character of that day.

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

Now come to the scripture, which I read at the beginning of the meeting, Matthew 24, and you will find our Lord comments upon that time in the most remarkable way. Having detailed all the surrounding circumstances of that day, He says in verse 15, "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand): then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." What does the shortening of those days refer to? It carries you back to another scripture in the book of Daniel, Dan. 12: 11, "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." That is more than a thousand two hundred and sixty; it is three and a half years and one month more. That is,

the end of the seventieth week will scarcely bring in the contemplated blessing, they must hold out in their trouble and wait thirty days longer; and then Daniel adds, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." That is another forty-five days further on. At that moment, when God puts His hand to things, He does not take very long about it. After the seventieth week closes, another month will produce wonderful effects, and at the end of the thousand-three hundred and thirty-five days the reign of the Son of Man will be established.

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

There is great grace in the Lord's desiring that no obstacle might be in the way of those who were bid to flee then, — "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." etc. He gives them further warning not to listen to this man, or that, because they have then distinctly to understand, that, at that moment, He is, Himself, coming to their rescue. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," He says, "shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (verses 29, 30). I know that expositors have attempted to explain these verses, by saying their fulfilment was the Romans taking Jerusalem. But on the very face of it, we cannot accept that. The Romans did not come from the east, but from the west, — "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (verses 27, 28). What is the carcase? Corrupt, dead Judaism.

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

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

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

temple. This white-robed multitude have a priestly place, in the temple, on this earth, and they will have the deep consolations of God, worth all the sorrows they have passed through. It is a lovely picture of how, after the tribulation, God brings them into perfect blessing on earth.

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