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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

M A T T H E W 24.

An Address (revised) at

61, Upton Lane, Forest Gate

23rd August, 1915

by

PERCY W. HEWARD.

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Read Luke 21:1-20.

Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are largely parallel, but no Scripture is unnecessary. I suppose we shall be of one mind, beloved friends, that in none of these chapters have we the complete address which our Lord Jesus Christ gave. Each one contains extracts. The narrative we have just read in Luke lays a great stress upon the destruction of Jerusalem. It speaks of Jerusalem compassed with armies in the past. The Lord says not a word there about the abomination of desolation, the language is quite distinct from that in Matthew 24. We find very similar expressions as to fleeing from Jerusalem as those which are used in Matthew 24 for flight thence, when the abomination of desolation is set up, showing that the one event was the type of the other event. Some have confused the two, they have even dared to say that the coming of Christ was at the siege of Jerusalem! Nay, the past destruction of Jerusalem was a picture, a figure, a type, a prophesy of the future "destruction" of Jerusalem: - The destruction, or capture in the future to be quickly followed by restoration, for THEN shall the Lord reign in Mount Zion before His ancients gloriously. That the wording in Luke 21 concerns the destruction of Jerusalem is clear, because in the 24th verse it declares, they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Here is a plain statement that a great gap comes in Verse 24. The passage goes on from that which we

commonly call 70 A.D. to the FUTURE time when, as the 25th verse at once adds, there shall be signs in the sun and the moon, and the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, and sea and the waves rearing. Plainly here is a future climax, though SOME of the events may have been or be anticipated before the time of the end. The parable of the ~~an~~ fig tree comes in Luke as well as in Matthew, but in ^adifferent context, and with a slightly different phraseology. But one thing is clear. In all three Gospels prophetic teaching is practical. We noticed when we read Luke, the first word was, "Take heed" and the last words are "watch ye, therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. In Mark 13 the first word of the discourse is "Take heed, and the last word, "What I say unto you, I say unto all "Watch". So is it in Matthew 24, and unless we are studying spiritually and practically, we shall be studying in a way that will bring no value nor profit. We NEED the guidance and applying of the Holy Spirit. If we are the Lord's blood-redeemed people, ~~an~~ the bright hope of His Coming back should fill us with joy, in the midst of a sin stained world. So should we ever be on our prayerful guard lest in these perilous times we be deceived by anything~~s~~ around us which would take our minds off Christ. But Matthew 24 is the record which specially comes before us to-night, or (shall I rather put it?) SOME aspects of Matthew 24. Every one who has enjoyed that Chapter will bear testimony that there cannot be a FULL study of Matthew 24 in one evening.

Notice that the disciples were looking at the buildings. Christ was thinking of the destruction of the buildings, and of all which would last, in a spiritual sphere. They were so surprised at His words that some of them came to Him privately, and asked, When shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age? Tell us when

shall THESE things be, AND what the sign? Here are two questions, the Lord gives the two answers. The first question was respecting the destruction of the temple. There shall not be left a stone upon a stone. When shall these things be? The other question was distinct, What shall be the sign of Thy Coming? Here is the special word "Parousia" which literally signifies "being beside" or "presence". A word which is well known to believers in connection with the epistles, and which, I suppose you will not be surprised to know, occurs among the Gospels only in the Gospel of Matthew which is the one Gospel to mention the "church". The Parousia is here brought before us definitely in the Gospel of Matthew, but we must not hurry on to the sign of the Parousia. When shall THESE things be? We know that the "these" things are past. Does the Lord Jesus Christ indicate this?, if so, How? "This" would lead us to a word study. Bible word studies are always beautiful, there is not a single misplaced word in Scripture. There is not a single word where you could use a better one. To say anything else is only to show ignorance and sin. The more one studies the Scripture one must feel that God has no mere synonyms. Every word is the best word in the best place. How then does this chapter speak of "this" and "that". You know, beloved firends, how WE use the words "this" and "that". "This" is near me. "That" is further off. And the use of language thereby shown existed in the ancient Greek. Will you therefore carefully notice that the question concerns "these things", which are likewise mentioned in chapter 23:26. We read on and we find the word "these", the contrasted word "those" are used again and again. Verse 8. All THESE are the beginning of sorrows. At once we feel, Does such a statement look backward or forward? Plainly with the expression "All these" it looks backward. The context implies this. Now we comprehend the Lord answers their first question in verses 5-8. Is the word "sign"

used there? No. Is the word "coming" found there? No. Do we read of the end of the age in those verses? No. They are the verses which refer to THESE THINGS. We read on and we reach, for example, verses 19 - 22. THOSE days, THOSE days, also in 29, THOSE days. "THOSE" is the plural of "that". Here then is the contrast. At least from verse 15, for verse 19 looks back to verse 15, - at least from verse 15 we have "those days" a contrast with the "this". But what is just before verse 15? "And then shall the END come". Now we realize the BEGINNING of sorrows up till verse 8, the end commences with verse 15. The intervening period is in verses 9-14, - Verses which are marked by the word "many" : - Many be offended, many false prophets, shall receive many, the love of many shall wax cold. But what is the pointing out word in the intervening verses? Is it "this" or is it "that"? As to times and as to troubles it is neither, but as to persons and as to truth it is "this". In verse 13 we read, He that endureth unto the end, THIS ONE (it is rendered "the same"), this one shall be saved. Verse 14 And THIS Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world. So we realize that in verse 13 and verse 14, which both lead up to the end, it is implied that though these days will change to those days, still unto the end we have the same "this" of persons, and the same "this" of the Gospel. The times change, the "this" of the persons in Christ does not change. The "this" of the Gospel, this Gospel of the Kingdom, is not altered. The same Gospel; But we have noticed the section beginning with verse 15 deals with "those days". Does IT mention the Coming, the Parousia? Yes, in verse 27. "So shall also the Coming of the Son of man be". Here then we have brought before us the answer to the second question of the disciples. We find the very language in verse 30. Then shall appear The SIGN but now we have a little difficulty. Verse 31 is plainly a climax. Verse 32 begins with the word "but", it is rendered "now". "But learn a parable of the

figtree. Or, more forcibly, "From the fig-tree learn THE parable"; - the parable the Lord has put there; - teaching is found in everything of nature. When the branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh, so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things know that IT IS NEAR even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, THIS generation shall not pass till all THESE things be fulfilled. Here again we have the "this" and the "these" introduced by the word "but". The passage was literally fulfilled. The "these" things came true, for that generation, in a physical sense. For what is a generation? I am not now speaking of human statistics. What is a generation according to Scripture? God was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart, and THAT generation had to be destroyed. Their carcasses must fall in the wilderness. How long? 40 years. 40 years is a generation. About how long from the death of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem? Just about 40 years. Literally, exactly, prophetically, the prophecy came true. The parable of the fig tree has a further application. The destruction of Jerusalem was a type of the future. You recollect that we saw in Luke, that something which the Lord in Matthew applies to the future abomination of desolation, was applied to the past surrounding of Jerusalem with armies. In like manner that which in Matthew refers to the past "It is near, at the doors" is in Luke's Gospel applied to the future, - "The kingdom of God is near". Quite a different expression. But, you say, how about THIS GENERATION with regard to the kingdom of God? This generation is in Luke employed in a moral sense. The same evil generation was unimproved, and is unimproved and will be unimproved till the kingdom of God comes (Luke 18:8) Thus there is a twofold meaning to the expression "this generation", just as to the threatening which reached Adam, In the day that thou eat-

est thou shalt surely die, He died that very same day, - morally. But a day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and his body died within the thousand years. No man ever reached a thousand years. Several of whom we know reached over 900, but never the day of the Lord until the day of the Lord shall come. So the wording of Scripture is perfect. Mark in Matthew how immediately after the parable of the fig tree, another "but" comes. Verse 36 - a "but", why a "but"? "Of that day". Here is the CHANGING BACK to the "that". So we have a wonderful structure. "This" verse 4 to verse 8. Then the interval and the "that" period up till verse 31, then "this" again, verses 32-35. Afterwards we return to "that". Now it is remarkable that with respect to the "that" periods we find a peculiar stress on the word "then". I believe I am right in saying it occurs 9 times in Matthew 24, and 8 times in Matthew 25, which is a continuation of the same discourse. There should be no chapter break. Mark several occurrences of the word "then": - Verse 9, Then shall they deliver you up. Verse 10 then shall many be offended. Verse 14, Then shall come the end. Verse 16, Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains. Verse 21, Then shall be great tribulation. Verse 23, Then if any man shall say unto you. Verse 30. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man, and THEN shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. Verse 40, Then shall two be in the field. Chapter 25:1, Then shall the kingdom of the heaven be likened. Verse 7 Then all those virgins arose, and so on. Now the word "Then" does not mean "AFTER that time". There is a distinct expression for "after" in verse 29. "Then" means "at that time" and here we have a number of "thens" referring to different things at different times. If "then" is left out we must be careful before we say there is a chronological sequence. May I illustrate what I mean in Verse 30? THEN shall appear the sign of the Son of man, and THEN shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds ~~in~~ of heaven

with power and great glory. Does that mean that they mourn before they see Him? It does not say so. It does not say, And AFTER or even NEXT they shall see, and THEN He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet. Is this subsequent? Subsequent to their mourning? Scripture does not say so. Rather when the word "then" is left out and we have the linking word "and", we have a suggestion that these ~~two~~ things take place at the same time. In other words the tribes mourn, the Son of man comes, the elect are gathered at THE SAME TIME. The link with "and's" would suggest this. Surely we can see that Scripture is worded perfectly.

Now Coming back to the first section, verse 4-8. We do not here have the nations, but A NATION against A NATION. That is the Roman nation primarily, against the Jewish nation. This was strictly and literally fulfilled. The Lord ever keeps His word. After the mention of the BEGINNING of sorrows we have the trouble of the Lord's people among all nations*- verse 9. But, thanks be unto God, His Truth is preached for a witness unto all nations, verse 14. The period of 9-14, is still going on. The Lord's people are NOT to seek popularity they are NOT to be led astray, they should be careful of their love waxing cold, they should seek to endure, it is their privilege to emphasize the one precious Gospel, and then, says verse 14, shall the end come. A great many mistakes have been made through the belief that the end must necessarily be a point of time. There are two words for "end" used in this Chapter. One of them undoubtedly does NOT indicate a point of time, but a period of time. The ending of the age is a period, I believe, of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. It is an expression which occurs in Matthew 13 where we read, verse 39, The harvest is the end of the age. Our English version, "the end of the World" is apt to confuse. The world goes on for a thousand years after this, with Christ as its glorious King. The harvest is the end of the age, but the harvest is

not viewed, either physically or spiritually, as a matter of a moment. If you look at the parable of the tares, the Scripture is distinct. Let both grow together until the harvest, AND IN THE TIME OF HARVEST, not the moment of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles TO burn them. It does not say, Gather them and burn them first. Gather them first, the burning takes place afterwards. But gather the wheat into My garner. The tares are gathered three and a half years before the wheat, but they are not burned, gathered TO burn, is the Divine statement. The expression "end of the age" does not occur, I believe, outside Matthew's Gospel, but we have a similar expression in the epistle to the Hebrews where we have the end of the ages, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ appearing in the end of the ages to put away sin. The Lord Jesus was manifested to Israel when John baptized. For how long was He manifested to Israel? I think it is usually acknowledged - three and a half years. The ending of the ages was a period of three and a half years then and the end of the age future is a period, I believe, according to Scripture of three and a half years. This may help us with respect to Matthew 24. The abomination of desolation is set up the beginning of the end of the age, and I venture to say at the beginning of the end, using the other word for "end". The link of verses 14 and 15 seems to imply this. Now when is the abomination of desolation set up? According to Daniel 9 it is set up in the midst of the seven years, that is for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. The Lord gives instruction to His disciples with respect to that period. He tells them that if they are at Jerusalem to flee from Jerusalem. Now this is remarkable, and very encouraging. You look in this passage and you find no mention of any other city or any other district but Judah. The abomination of desolation will be at Jerusalem, consequently those in that locality are mentioned. Others will not have the same fleeing. Different Scriptures give different

geographical views, but it is deeply refreshing to know that there will be a number of believers in Judea. Beloved friends, I believe that this solemn war is leading up to such a blessing. Look at the number of Israel now to be found in the land of Palestine. Probably at the end of the war many more will migrate thither, and the Lord has promised a reviving in the last days, and He has shown us here that many of Israel will be included, - many in the land of Judea. "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day". "Oh" some have declared, "Here is proof that it is speaking to JEWS who keep the Sabbath". It is speaking to some who will NOT keep the Sabbath, for it says, Pray ye that your flight be not on the Sabbath day, implying that if the event did come on the Sabbath they would flee, - but a Jew could only go a Sabbath day's journey. It does not say, Pray ye that the time of your flight may not come on the Sabbath, since then you could not flee, because you are Jews, but implies difficulties from WITHOUT. Hence it says, pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, - not because it was wrong to flee in the winter, but because the winter would stop them. So, not because it was wrong to flee on the Sabbath, but because there would be hindrances from without. FOR, adds the next verse - (the Holy Spirit explains why they are not to wish to flee on the Sabbath) - FOR there shall be great tribulation. We can well realize that if the Jewish people have a Jewish state once more, as they probably will have soon after the end of the present war, they will make it very unpleasant for believing Jews who seek to flee on ~~the~~ the Sabbath. Can you not picture to yourself what the scene would be in Judea at such a time as this? If you know anything of history you know what will happen among the Jews when there is an attempt to put an idol in their temple. The whole nation is in a ferment! Now, suppose the believing Jews are attempting to leave Judaea, what will the unbelieving Jews say? "These traitors will not unite with us to fight

against those who are putting their image in our temple! They are falling to the enemy". There will be the bitterest opposition. Oh the Sabbath day that opposition would be the bitterest of all. They would not find conveyances to take them for their flight. The religious Jews would be desperate against them on the Sabbath for fleeing away. Scripture shows a great revival of orthodox religion among the Jews, - not acceptable to God, but very religious. The nation will have sacrifices, they will bring their sheep, they will bring their oxen. Isa. 66 prophecies this. All is clearly marked out in accord with Scripture. Matthew 24 fits in with other parts of God's truth. "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" - not shortened beyond what prophecy says they will be, but made short. That is, they will only be 3½ years, not 1260 years, as some have interpreted it. Scripture will keep literally true. For the elect's sake. And in verse 24 "to deceive, if possible, the very elect". A beautiful name suggestive of grace, and inclusive of those who are saved, and those who are not saved at that period, but who WILL BE blessed afterwards. That is the beauty of this expression. Let me illustrate what I mean. During the period of Antichrist an image will be set up, and all will be told as in Daniel 3, to worship it. If any refuse, and if any refuse to have the mark of the beast upon them, there will be man's judgment at least that will be the aim of Antichrist. But if they do receive the mark of the beast they must be condemned for ever, and there are to be people to live on the millennial earth, when Christ is King. There are to be those who are spared. Are they not spared because they are THE ELECT? But can you call them the Lord's people during Antichrist's reign? Some of them will not know Him at all. Some of them will be surprised and look upon Him Whom they pierced, and know Him for the

first time. But they are all elect, and for the elect's sake, He hath shortened those days. Satan will try and lead astray the very elect, INCLUDING all these. Mark the different language which you read in verse 31, They shall gather together His elect, not simply the elect, but the elect who are already claimed as His own. These are saved ones. These are believing elect ones. Do distinguish between "the elect" and "His elect". Every word is perfect in the Scripture of Truth. "The elect" is a wider term, to include those who will be blessed afterwards. "His elect" - those whom He has claimed as His very own. Satan will do everything to hinder the Lord's work, and particularly He will teach at this period a secret coming of Christ. "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold He is in the desert" go not forth. Behold He is the secret chambers, believe it not, FOR as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the Parousia of the Son of man be." Not secret but sudden, and in visible glory. But what about verse 28? "For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together". Verses 27 and 28 both begin with the word "for", and both read on from verse 26. The Lord says, Do not believe them, there will be a manifest coming in glory, He also says, When they say to you Behold He is in the desert, remember it is "Wherever the CARCASS is". You will not be going out to a living Lord, you will be going out to a carcass if you follow them, and the eagles of judgment will swoop down on the carcass. You will, if you go out to them, be only preparing for the eagles of wrath to swoop upon you. The Lord's people will mount with wings as eagles, - spiritually, and also be caught up to meet their Lord in the air, but the eagles will swoop down upon the carcass. The carcass is the contrast with the living Lord. Here is judgment. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon ^{shall not give her light, and the stars} shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken".

This is plainly parallel with the sixth seal in Rev. 6, where we have the BEGINNING of the day of the Lord, "For the great day of His wrath is come". Now we reach a further thought. Immediately after the tribulation of those days there comes the day: immediately after the tribulation of those days the Lord appears, His elect are caught up, THE day starts. Now that day is distinctly declared to be the day of great climax of trouble for Jacob. It is the day of Jacob's trouble, so says Jer. 30. Compare Zech. 14. Behold a day cometh thy spoil shall be divided, the city shall be taken. The people go into captivity. There shall be the DAY after DAYS. The day of the Lord is connected with judgment, with wrath. Listen to another verse, "For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart," Never, beloved friends, have you any mention of wrath or indignation in the book of Revelation till the Day of the Lord starts? Only when the saints are caught up at the sixth seal does wrath begin. Rather I should say, we have the wrath of Satan that is mentioned, the Lord's people must go through the ~~xxx~~ wrath of Satan, but what does that matter when they are delivered from the wrath of God? Delivered from the judgment of God, they can bear all the onslaught of the enemy. They can bear all the attack of the evil one, for the Lord says, I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand. So in 2 Thess 2 the apostle says, I beseech you, brethren, by the parousia of our Lord and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind to think that the day of the Lord has set in. You are to have the parousia which is after the tribulation of those days, but before, and as, the day starts. The day is a day of clouds and gloominess, - other Scriptures bear this out. The Lord's redeemed will then be caught up. That time will be the period of the hour of which Scripture speaks very definitely. So will the redeemed be with their Lord; from one end of heaven to the other will they be gathered together. He shall call to the HEAVENS from above, and to the EARTH

that He may judge His people. Some saints will be in heaven already - Paradise; others will be on earth. He will call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me resting upon a Sacrifice, and the heavens shall declare His righteousness. What will they declare? They will reveal Christ, the Righteousness of God. The Lord's redeemed will all have on their robe then. The fine lined is the righteousnesses of the saints. The heavens shall declare His righteousness. We are made the righteousness of GOD in Him, and believers will be caught up from earth and the heavens will declare His righteousness, as that passage shows. At once, after mentioning that time of the Judgment Seat of Christ. "For God is Judge Himself", and that He will vindicate His people, - at once Psalm 50 goes on to speak of dealings with Israel. So is it in Rev. 7. As soon as the day of the Lord begins in Rev. 6 - dealings with Israel are seen in Rev. 7. There is not the separation of Israel nationally as God's people till the redeemed are caught up in the sixth unsealing. The Scripture goes on, beloved friends, though we have not time to consider it, but we do need to notice the words of verse 44, "Be ye also ready". Verse 46 - "Blessed is that servant whom His Lord when He cometh shall find so doing". Oh that if we know the grace of the Lord we may be ready ones, and doing ones, looking for that Blessed Hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people to be around Him zealous of good works.

I might just add that the 25th chapter will help many in this connection. In the first parable we have the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Bridegroom. In the second, the Judgment Seat of Christ our

Lord. In the third, Christ's reigning on EARTH as King. The first parable plainly speaks of a reviving. THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, not AFTER chapter 24:51 but in that period. So there is to be revival among the Lord's people (Cf. Ezra 9:8). This is not after the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, as verse 10 shows. Consequently it belongs to the PRESENT dispensation. May the Lord's people enter into the beginning of Matthew 25, then will they experience the force of Rev. 14 where we have virgins again, and they are characterised as following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.
