

Our Lord's Great Prophecy



**“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”
(Matthew 24:7)**

OUR LORD'S GREAT PROPHECY

The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, sometimes called "Our Lord's Great Prophecy," began as Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives and the disciples went to him privately and asked:

"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming [presence, Greek *parousia*], and of the end of the world [age, Greek *aion*]?" (Matt. 24:3)

The Master gave a very comprehensive reply to the disciples' inquiry. To appreciate his message and to understand the content, we need to realize his concern. He wanted not only to alert his people about meaningful events down here *at this end of the Gospel or Christian Age* but also to provide for their welfare *throughout the age*. "Lo, I am with you *always*" is the principle (Matt. 28:20). Indeed the message was designed to benefit the whole Church as well as the last members living at the conclusion of the age. In addition, our Lord had to be careful not to discourage the disciples. To have given them any inkling that the Kingdom would not come until approximately two thousand years hence would have disheartened them and thus been harmful in connection with bestirring them to Christian activity.

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

“All these are the beginning of sorrows.” (Matt. 24:4-8)

Our Lord’s purpose in mentioning earthquakes, pestilences, famines, wars and rumors of wars, and deceptions that would arise from many coming in his name “saying, I am Christ” was to give a thumbnail description of events that would transpire throughout the Gospel Age. He likened this description of the age to being merely “the *beginning* of sorrows,” which leads up to the conclusion of the age, a period of particular trial.

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” (Matt. 24:9,10)

Jesus was telling his disciples that during this same period of time, they would suffer persecution as Christians. In fact, persecution would come from some who would think they were doing God a

service (John 16:2). Therefore, the statement “*Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted*” *does not mean that after the earthquakes, wars, famines, etc., which are the “beginning of sorrows,”* Jesus’ followers would be delivered up, for our Lord was *reviewing the same period of time*. Not only was he predicting convulsions of nature and trouble among the nations, but also he was reviewing the Gospel Age from the standpoint of how it would affect his people and what their experiences would be. “*Then [that is, during this same time period] shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you.... And then [during this same time period] shall many be offended, and shall betray one another.*” Betrayal to the persecuting power would take place even within the family unit and among brethren in some cases. “*Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death*” (Mark 13:12).

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (Matt. 24:11-13)

Our Lord prophesied that many “false prophets” (instruments of deception) would arise and deceive many. In addition to the false prophets as *individuals* or false Messiahs, various religious *systems*

would arise and deceive many. During this same long period of time, iniquity would abound, causing the love of many to wax cold; that is, the tendency of many Christians would be to grow cold. But Jesus indicated that if his followers endured faithfully unto the end of their earthly course—if they retained their constancy of hope and their confidence in him and were faithful unto death—they would be saved (Heb. 3:14; Rev. 2:10).

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matt. 24:14)

The gospel of the Kingdom had to “be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” *before* “the end” could come. Jesus was saying that a time would come at the end of the age when there would be a worldwide proclamation of truth. Moreover, he was inferring to his small band of disciples, who were the nucleus of a new faith, that he wanted them to go out and preach the gospel of the Kingdom to others, the implication being that although the gospel message would have a small beginning, it would enlarge and continue on until eventually the message would involve all nations.

Of course verse 14 was also saying that a time would come when all nations would at least have a witness of the gospel. In other words, the gospel would be printed in all the languages of earth. “And then shall the end come.” Without revealing a specific time period, Jesus gave the disciples an answer to their question as to when the end of

the age would come. And this clue is important—that, first, the gospel message would at least be a *witness* unto all the nations.

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

“Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.” (Matt. 24:15,16)

Early Christians felt that the fulfillment of these verses occurred in AD 70 and 135, and the wording of this admonition was designed to benefit Christians during these two crucial periods as well as at the very end of the age. Thus when Vespasian came down in AD 69 and besieged Jerusalem with the intent of destroying it, Christians who found themselves encircled concluded that the Roman army, which was about to defile the sanctuary, was the “abomination of desolation” prophesied in Daniel 11:31. Although not the full significance of the prophecy, this interpretation had a practical value in preparing Christians to flee when news came from Rome that the emperor had died and Vespasian relaxed the siege of Jerusalem to hurry back there. Eventually he became emperor, but meanwhile he left the siege of Jerusalem in the hands of his son Titus. During the interim relaxation of the siege, Christians in the province of Judea had sufficient time to flee to the mountains of Petra and to other places for refuge. The following admonitions helped them. With practical and natural

understanding, they fled, leaving everything behind and getting out as fast as possible.

“Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

“Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!” (Matt. 24:17-19)

When certain prophecies and the other Gospels are analyzed in detail, the prophecy about the “abomination of desolation” in Matthew chapter 24 is seen to have a higher, deeper, and more important meaning. As we near the very end of the age, the abomination of desolation will be exposed. It represents a doctrine that is abominable in the sight of God, for its effect is to nullify and to distract from the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, his *one continual offering*. The account is referring to the doctrine of the Mass, which displaced the doctrine of the Ransom (1 Tim. 2:5,6). When this abominable doctrine is seen in its true light, God’s people will take the proper steps to make sure they are fed only on the Word of truth; that is, they will depart from circumstances and conditions that are influenced, either directly or indirectly, by that doctrine—whether they are in a religious “house” or in the “field” (the Christian world) or in teaching positions feeding the less mature with spiritual food and doctrine. As soon as God’s people realize the

contaminating influences of such a doctrine, they should separate themselves (Rev. 18:4).

“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.” (Matt. 24:20-22)

There was such extreme bloodshed, suffering, and death when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in AD 70 that it was natural for Christians living at that time to think the event was a fulfillment of the “great tribulation” Jesus had predicted. The same was true when the Bar Kochba rebellion occurred in AD 135 and was violently suppressed. Christians again thought that perhaps the experiences Jesus had predicted were fulfilled. However, verse 20, “Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day,” identifies which particular trouble Jesus was speaking about. The experiences of AD 70 and 135 involved more than one literal day, and a careful analysis of these events shows that the flight of verse 20 did not apply to either of these dates. Rather, the Scriptures indicate that at the very end of the age, there is to be a great Time of Trouble—“winter” in contrast to summer—and that this trouble will occur somewhere

within the confines of earth's great antitypical *thousand-year* "sabbath day," which began in 1874. To repeat: Sometime *during* the thousand-year sabbath day, the "winter" Time of Trouble will occur. Jesus advised Christians to separate themselves unto him and to be fortified with the doctrines of truth *before the trouble begins*.

And there is another point. When the winter Time of Trouble comes in the sabbath day, any Christians who have not already fled from the Babylonian-type church systems and who thus find it necessary to flee *at that time* will not be of the highly honored Little Flock class (Luke 12:32). The emphasis is, "Pray ye that your flight be *not* in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." It is as though Jesus was saying, "At the end of this age, a condition of trial and trouble will befall the ecclesiastical and civil powers. To receive the highest reward and approval, God's people will have to make their calling and election sure *prior to this event*." Luke 21:36 says, "Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass" upon the earth. In other words, faithful Christians are promised a *shelter*—they will be taken away from the anarchistic conditions that will prevail at the very end of the age immediately preceding the establishment of Christ's Kingdom of peace (Matt. 6:10). Christians are to bestir themselves *before* the troublous conditions occur so that they might be of the Little Flock class. Those who come out of the nominal church systems later—that is, those who leave when Babylon falls—will be, at most, of the secondary (Great Company) spiritual class, who

lose out on the marriage because of failing to respond quickly enough (Rev. 7:13,14; 18:21).

The statement "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" furnishes another clue. The phrase "for the elect's sake" should read "by the elect," as the word "sake" was not in the original Greek manuscript and should be deleted to prevent a false impression. The Christ class in glory will shorten the trouble; otherwise, no flesh would be saved. In other words, without the intervention of the "elect," no one would survive the trouble. Thank God, the promised Redeemer and Deliverer, described by Obadiah 21 as "saviours [plural]" upon Mount Zion, will come to the rescue at the very end of the age!

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

**"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."
(Matt. 24:23,24)**

The word "then," as used here and as stated previously, does not mean that verses 23 and 24 are sequential, that their fulfillment will occur immediately after the great tribulation. Again Jesus was giving a review. He was telling how God's people should react to great deceptions that will occur at the end of the age, as indicated by "Lo, here is

Christ, or there.” Various religious institutions have arisen during the Gospel Age that purport to be the way of salvation—teaching that their doctrines and way are the only hope of salvation. And certain religious systems have made this claim in a very dogmatic manner. Only recently has there been some moderation of this stance, but in the near future, as conditions become worse and men’s hearts fail them for fear, the claims will be reasserted, causing a severe trial for the Lord’s people, especially when the claims are supported by “signs and wonders” so great that, if possible, they would deceive even the “very elect” (Luke 21:26). The *great* signs and miracles will seemingly authenticate the false Christs and prophets. Just as Jannes and Jambres, two of Pharaoh’s magicians, withstood Moses and produced some of the same miracles in connection with the Exodus, so occult and evil powers will be influential in the near future when they produce supernatural signs and wonders (2 Tim. 3:8). Contrary to what many falsely assume, the fact that something is supernatural does not necessarily mean it is of God. Only when the sign or miracle is *in harmony with God’s Word* is it from Him. The Apostle Paul stated the principle when he warned that even if an angel came down from heaven and preached a different gospel, the disciples were not to believe it (Gal. 1:8,9).

“Behold, I have told you before.” (Matt. 24:25)

Jesus *forewarned* of the coming deceptions, and this warning was very important in his thinking.

“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.” (Matt. 24:26)

By laying down certain principles, this verse helps us to intelligently analyze the meaning of events at the end of the age. Jesus was saying, “If anyone claims to be Messiah or claims to be of God and he arises or his origin is from a desert abode or some other geographic locality—if he is identified with a *particular literal place*—BELIEVE IT NOT! DO NOT BE DECEIVED!” Thus we know that in the future, Christ is *not* to be identified in a specific spot. One will not be able to point to him and say, “There he is.” He will not appear physically, nor will he be seen in “secret chambers” such as at séances or through other occult methods, which usually occur under conditions of darkness. Occult experiences often deceive people into thinking they are having an audience with the holy angels, Jesus, or even God Himself. However, Jesus warned that such experiences are *deceptions of fallen angels and evil powers*. We are not to expect that God will communicate with His people either (1) in a physical or visual sense, where a personality can be identified as Messiah, or (2) in the sense of going into “secret chambers” for counsel and an experience with him. Neither method is proper.

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming [presence, Greek *parousia*] of the Son of man be.” (Matt. 24:27)

In verse 27, Jesus told the nature of his Kingdom when he would return at his Second Advent. However, some explanation is needed, for lightning does not shine from the east unto the west. The Greek word *astrape*, which is translated “lightning,” does not necessarily carry the thought of rapidity of motion. Two angels appeared at the Garden Tomb after our Lord’s resurrection (Matt. 28:2,3; Mark 16:5). If their faces had been as “lightning” in the normal sense of the word, the disciples would not have been able to discern their visage or even determine that one was *young*. But if we understand the Greek word *astrape* to mean a bright illumination or shining, a holy halo—that is, without the jagged lightning effect—then we can appreciate what Jesus meant. Also, the word *astrape* is used for the light or bright shining of a candle in Luke 11:36, so once again rapidity of motion is not the thought.

Jesus was saying, “*As the bright shining of the sun emanates out of the east and shines unto the west, so shall the presence of the Son of man be in the Kingdom.*” The light and realization that he is Master of the situation and Christ over all the earth will be everywhere manifest. There will be no need to say, “Lo, he is here” or “Lo, he is there,” for the evidence of his power and control will be worldwide, shining from one end of the horizon unto the other. The influence and beneficence of his Kingdom will be everywhere apparent, so we should not be looking for visual personalities or experiences in secret chambers to identify his Second Advent. Jesus’ warning intimates that deceptive

conditions will exist at the end of the age, soon to come, and while occult powers have deceived many down through the age, conditions will be MUCH MORE DECEPTIVE in the near future when *a supernatural materialization will be accompanied by lying signs and wonders* (2 Thess. 2:9,10). God's people have been given clues to help identify and properly discern between that which is evil and that which is good.

“For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” (Matt. 24:28)

Here is an indication that Jesus' message would revolve around his dead humanity, that is, around an understanding of the necessity for his death as the vicarious sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the world. The understanding of the doctrine and philosophy of the Ransom—that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man—is the central theme of a message that attracts those with an eagle-like disposition (Heb. 2:9). God's “eagles” are those individuals with a far-ranging vision and a strong appetite for His Word. Seeing this message from afar, they gather together around it, particularly now at the end of the age.

“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.” (Matt. 24:29)

This verse has a twofold signification. Some of these signs have already occurred in a *natural* manner, one fulfillment being a dark day in the New England states in 1780. The other event was a spectacular phenomenon of falling stars in the heavens in 1833. In Georgia, one shooting star was reported to appear as large as the moon. Jesus gave these clues to awaken watching Christians to a realization of the prophecies that tell about the establishment of his Kingdom. Those who were rightly exercised energetically began to investigate and study the meaning of prophecy. As a result, the Adventists and other movements developed—until finally today, God’s people, as individuals, are being blessed with a further understanding of Bible end-time prophecies.

It would not be surprising if immediately prior to the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom, unusual phenomena again occur in the heavens and in the earth in a very dramatic fashion, somewhat like what happened when Jesus was crucified. At that time, the darkening of the day and the earthquake indicated that he truly was the Messiah (Matt. 27:54).

A still further application is along spiritual lines, as follows: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days [the persecution of true Christians by the nominal religious systems] shall the [papal] sun be darkened, and the moon [papal canon law] shall not give her light, and the stars [cardinals, bishops, etc.] shall fall from [the ecclesiastical]

heaven, and the powers of the heavens [ecclesiasticism] shall be shaken [fall].”

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matt. 24:30)

Verse 30 describes the way in which the Kingdom will be established. The “sign of the Son of man in heaven” does not refer to Jesus’ *parousia* (the Greek word referring to his initial presence). On the contrary, the *parousia* of Christ will not be known to the tribes or families of the earth in general, but it will be known to the most saintly ones of the Church of Christ. Consequently, the “sign of the Son of man” must, in some sense, be related to his *epiphania* (the Greek word for his shining forth in the flaming fire of judgments), which the whole world of mankind will recognize.

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matt. 24:31)

We are not to understand that verse 31 will be fulfilled sequentially, that is, after what is described in verse 30. A great message (“a great sound of a trumpet”) will *precede* the *epiphania* (the evidence of the appearance of the “sign of the Son of man in heaven”).

Newspapers are sometimes called *The Clarion* or *The Herald*, and even the word “trump” has been used by local papers. Such expressions indicate that the purpose of the newspaper is to herald forth a *message*. The Scriptures clearly show that the Church is to be with Jesus—faithful Christians will be glorified together with him—*before* the sign of the Son of man appears in heaven and all the tribes of earth mourn and mentally discern him coming with *great power and glory*. Therefore, Christians *should not anticipate seeing the Lord come visually* because, if faithful, they will be with him in glory on the throne at that time (Rev. 2:26,27; Psa. 149:5-9; 1 Cor. 15:50). But earlier a message will go forth from one end of the ecclesiastical heavens to the other to gather Jesus’ elect from the four corners of the earth. The trumpet message is analogous to the gathering together of the eagles to the carcass, as previously described in verse 28.

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.” (Matt. 24:32)

The fig tree is used in the Scriptures to portray the Jewish nation (see Jeremiah chapter 24). When Jesus was going into the Holy City shortly before his crucifixion, he saw a fig tree that was barren (Mark 11:12-14,21). Just as the tree did not have the desired fruitage, so the nation of Israel did not bring forth the proper fruitage. When Jesus “came unto his own, ... his own received him not” (John 1:11). Only holy individuals of that nation, a small minority, responded to the

gospel message, yet that minority consisted of the twelve apostles and at least five hundred other Jews. Because the Jewish people as a whole rejected him, Jesus pronounced a period of disfavor on the nation, saying, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38). However, Jesus was indicating here in verse 32—and the thought is abundantly supported elsewhere in Scripture—that at the end of the Gospel Age, favor would return to the nation of Israel.

“So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” (Matt. 24:33)

Jesus had just given a thumbnail description of many events and experiences that would take place throughout the Gospel Age but prior to the inauguration of his Kingdom. Thus, without naming a date and by merely telling of certain events to anticipate, Jesus intended that his followers would watch for these events to take place, but for what purpose? *Increasingly and proportionately* as we see these things occurring, we should lift up our heads and rejoice because we realize the nearness of his Kingdom (Luke 21:31).

“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matt. 24:34,35)

One of the evidences the Kingdom is near is that the fig tree “putteth forth leaves” (Matt. 24:32). In 1878, after more than eighteen

hundred years, Jews were allowed to buy real estate in Palestine. As a result of 1914 and World War I, the Turkish rule over Palestine was broken, and Jews had even greater liberty to go back there. Finally, in 1948, the Jewish state of Israel was formed. Certainly the “fig tree” *has put forth leaves*. Therefore, the fulfillment of the rest of this prophecy is indeed imminent, as expressed by our Lord: “Verily I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*”

Without being given a specific date, when we see “these things” in process of fulfillment, we *know* the “generation” has come that will not pass away until these prophecies are fulfilled. Some attach a time period to the word “generation.” However, this Scripture is not necessarily trying to pinpoint an exact calendrical date as to when the Gospel Age will end but, instead, is very practical from another standpoint. About sixty years ago, the last Civil War veteran died. At that time, we could say the generation that began about 1863 had finally passed away.

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matt. 24:36)

Many Christians use this text to admonish others not to be too inquisitive in desiring to know what time or manner of time the Holy Spirit signified concerning these things, but such reasoning is an erroneous application (1 Pet. 1:11). To follow that sort of logic would mean that the Master himself would never have the privilege of

knowing. Hear the Scripture again: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, *but my Father only.*” At that particular time, even Jesus Christ did not know the date, but surely he knows now. Therefore, this verse is not a warning or a threat to discourage Bible study along the lines of prophecy, especially time prophecy.

“But as the days of Noe [Noah] were, so shall also the coming [presence, Greek *parousia*] of the Son of man be.” (Matt. 24:37)

Jesus was saying that if we consider the days of Noah and his experience in building the Ark, we will understand the meaning of events to take place at the end of the Gospel Age. A direct analogy or parallelism exists between the days of Noah and the days of the Son of man at his Second Advent, as brought out in the Luke account. “As it was in the *days of Noe*, so shall it be also in the *days of the Son of man*” (Luke 17:26).

“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

**“And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”
(Matt. 24:38,39)**

The main lesson of these verses is not to show the iniquity of the general populace in eating, drinking, marrying, and being given in

marriage because there is nothing wrong with these activities and they are necessary in everyday life. The lesson is that the general populace would be *unaware of the significance of events that are transpiring at the end of the age*. They would be going about the ordinary affairs of life oblivious of what is occurring. It is true that we are living in the last days and that perilous times have already come and conditions are waxing worse and worse, but other Scriptures discuss the evil conditions (2 Tim. 3:1). Verses 38 and 39 are emphasizing that the world is going on as usual, performing its functions *unaware*. The people “*knew not until the flood came, and took them all away.*”

Another problem in understanding this prophecy is saying that the analogy is between the Flood and the Second Coming of the Master. Those who hold this belief say that as the Flood was *imminent* in Noah’s day and as he kept preaching about the *coming* Flood, so it is with the Second Advent of Jesus. They teach, further, that as the people “*knew not until the flood came,*” so those who are uninformed today will “*know not*” until the Master *comes* at his Second Advent. But that is not the analogy. The account is saying that as it was in the days *before* the Flood, when the people were eating and drinking and giving in marriage, so it will be in the days of the Son of man *until the “flood” comes* and brings certain things to their attention. And what was brought to the people’s attention in Noah’s day? Noah preached that a *time of trouble* was to come upon the earth, and the general populace of that day did not believe his warning about the Flood. In

fact, there had not even been *any rain* upon the earth prior to the Flood. Rain was not necessary in that first dispensation because plants were supplied with water from moisture (dew or distillation) that came up from the ground (Gen. 2:5,6).

The Apostle Peter supported the Vailian theory by stating that the earth was standing *apart from* water as well as *in* water at the time immediately before the Flood; that is, a canopy or veil of water above was separated from the earth below by a “firmament” or atmosphere (2 Pet. 3:5; Gen. 1:6-8). The planet had normal oceans, rivers, and so forth, but the people were unaware of the *invisible* water canopy above the atmosphere *until the day it collapsed*. When the canopy broke and the Flood inundated the earth, Noah and his family were safe in the Ark he had built by faith according to God’s instructions. Prior to the Flood, not only did the people refuse to listen to Noah and say all things were continuing as they had since the time of creation, but also they did not expect a Flood because it had not rained previously.

Before the catastrophic Flood, the populace jeered Noah, yet in spite of the disbelievers and the mockers, he and his sons kept building the Ark. But what happened when the Flood came? *Then there were no more disbelievers*. Those who had previously disbelieved became believers—*but too late!* The account says the people were eating and drinking and knew not *until the Flood came*. In other words, the Flood became the *revealer* of the fact that Noah was indeed a *true prophet of*

God and that he had preached a *truthful message* of a coming Flood or *time of trouble*. And so now, at the end of this age, our Lord comes at his Second Advent as an *invisible* spirit being. (Incidentally, this event has already occurred, and this line of reasoning can be substantiated from the Scriptures.) During his Second Advent, there will be a “Flood” time of trouble, a period of great anarchy, which our Master in this very prophecy described as a time of “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21). The analogy of the Flood is to this time of “*great tribulation*.” Just as the Flood back in Noah’s day inundated the earth, so the Time of Trouble that is coming in the near future will engulf the people, society, in a worldwide Flood, figuratively speaking.

Notice the careful wording in verse 38: “In the *days [plural]* that were before the flood they were eating and drinking ... until *the day [singular]* that Noe entered into the ark.” The play on words emphasizes a *time period*. At the end of the first “world” or age, which ended with the Flood, there was a period of time described as “the days of Noe,” during which Noah was *present* preaching his message, and the people “knew not” until “the day” the Flood came (2 Pet. 3:6). What is signified by the comparison of *the days of Noah* with *the days of the Son of man*? The time period we are living in, during which Jesus is invisibly *present*, will be abruptly terminated by a short but intense trouble that is likened to the Flood.

Many lessons can be learned from the Flood. While the Ark was a real structure, and while it rescued Noah and his family and carried them over into the next dispensation to repopulate the earth after the Flood, the Apostle Peter likened the Ark to baptism and consecration to the Lord, showing that the only real safety a Christian can have, from a spiritual standpoint, is to find refuge in the “Ark” (1 Pet. 3:20,21). The Ark represents the Church that God has been building down through the age. This “Church Ark” will soon be complete. Then just as Noah and his family went into the Ark *before* the Flood started, so the true Church will go home, having made its “calling and election sure,” *before* the great Time of Trouble is precipitated upon the world (2 Pet. 1:10). It was not until God closed the door of the Ark that the Flood time of trouble came in Noah’s day (Gen. 7:16). The Master admonished us to be similarly prepared at this end of the age, and so did the Apostle Peter: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God? ... Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:11,12,14). The parallelism with the Ark and the Flood fits perfectly and beautifully the analogy Jesus used for the Time of Trouble at the end of the Gospel Age. The Church class will be complete and off the earthly scene *before* the trouble comes on the world.

Noah was given a seven-day notice for taking the animals into the Ark (Gen. 7:7-10). When the seven days expired and all of the animals had entered, God shut the door of the Ark, and the Flood time of trouble came. And so we find that during the Gospel Age, there have been seven stages of development of the Church of God as enumerated in the Book of Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev. 1:11). These seven stages represent the development of the Church during the process of entering into God's spiritual Ark. Not until the seven days or stages of the Church expire will the great tribulation occur.

It would be interesting—and truly a remarkable fulfillment—if, in addition to the details, parallels, and fulfillments of this end of the age with the days of Noah, the time elements were the same. In connection with the literal Flood of Noah's day, God gave advance warning, saying it would be yet 120 years before He would destroy the earth with a Flood (Gen. 6:3). For a period of 120 years, Noah was preaching a coming Flood and preparing to that end. It would be remarkable if the analogy were the same at this end of the age. Whether or not that is true remains to be seen.

The Apostle Peter drew a similar analogy except that he emphasized the evil conditions of society and the scoffers, as follows:

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

“And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” (2 Pet. 3:3-6)

The apostle was saying that at the end of the age, scoffers would be walking in their own lusts, and what do we find today? As conditions of evil grow increasingly worse and God does not intervene in earth's affairs to stop the workers of iniquity, the people are emboldened. They scoff and are no longer frightened by the thought of a judgment day. Believing that such a day will never occur and that the predictions of the past will fail to materialize, they walk “after their own lusts”; that is, they set whatever standards they like. They feel that whatever is pleasurable is not sin, and they scoff at the Word of God and at other standards of morality. It is characteristic of our day to not be ashamed of sin. Some go even further and deny the very existence of God. The vast majority of people are deliberately and willingly ignorant of God's past judgments, whereas they should be taking lessons from the scoffers in Noah's day (2 Pet. 3:7). For 120 years, the people jeered Noah's work of faith in building the Ark, but they were finally destroyed in the Flood.

People living today should grasp the lesson that God's judgment is waiting or sitting until the *due time* in the *near future*—just as the previous invisible canopy of water above the earth waited in Noah's day and then collapsed at the last minute. As the Scriptures clearly show, God has in reservation a *great judgment* that will befall the human race at the very end of the age. The Lord's people should follow God's command and, like Noah and his sons, respond to the leadings of His grace. They should hope in God's treasure chest, the Ark of safety, which He has prepared for the willing.

Indeed we are living at the end of the age. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat are all polluted. Senseless warfare and weaponry cause physical damage a thousandfold greater than what occurred in the past. And there is the potential for still greater damage with the atom, hydrogen, and cobalt radiation bombs; nerve gas; disease-spraying bombs; defoliation explosives; and flame- and liquid-throwing devices. Earth's food and mineral resources are being depleted, and man has the dilemma of disposing of plastic and other nonbiodegradable materials. No wonder men's hearts are starting to fail them for fear as they look over the earth! The earth is staggering to and fro like a drunken man, not knowing how to solve these problems (Psa. 107:27). As predicted, our day is a day of trouble and of clouds and thick darkness (Joel 2:2). Other problems include financial and economic woes, instability of the dollar, labor strikes, contamination of the mind through pornographic material, and all sorts of mental

disorders. Moreover, the colleges are undermining family life in an insidious manner, destroying the family prayer circle.

All of these conditions indicate we are living in the last days of the present age. The people should come to their senses and ask, “What are these conditions leading to?” The world picture should drive them to the Word of God. Thank God, those who have faith in His promises have a *real hope*—the hope of the Kingdom. And faith, instead of being shattered by the evil conditions, should be increased because these conditions are the fulfillment, in accurate detail, of what God predicted would occur at the very end of the age. Perilous times would come, and men would be heady, blasphemers, unholy, covenant breakers, lovers of pleasure, etc. (2 Tim. 3:1-5). After this predicted trouble, the sure Word of God equally predicts a coming great era of peace, health, and happiness in Messiah’s Kingdom of grace and truth. There is hope for the future. An anchor for faith, both sure and steadfast, lies within the veil (Heb. 6:19). Jesus Christ is the only hope for man’s salvation.

Frank Shallieu

**For more information on end-time prophecy,
see the book *The Keys of Revelation*.**

The Keys of Revelation



**END TIME
PROPHECIES
REVEALED**

The curious symbols and visions of the Book of Revelation mystify scholar and layman alike. *The Keys of Revelation* unlocks the secret code

language by presenting a solid flow of interpretation never before captured in any written treatise on the Book of Revelation. Every verse is explained without compromise to politics or organized religion, differentiating between “churchianity” and Christianity.

This 723-page book contains knowledge that will astound the honest reader and cause the humble Christian, seeking after righteousness and truth, to bow down before the Great Creator in thanksgiving . . . for “the time is at hand” to unseal “the sayings of the prophecy” of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 22:10).

