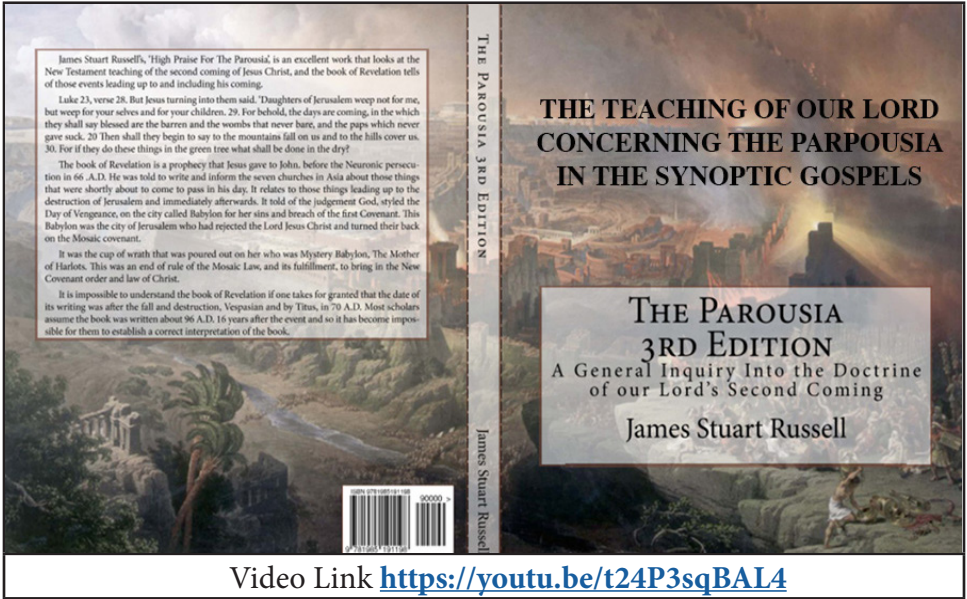


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2 THE PAROUSIA JAMES STUART RUSSELL
THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD CONCERNING THE PAROUSIA IN THE
SYNOPTICAL GOSPELS



The close of John the Baptist's ministry, in consequence of his imprisonment by Herod Antipas, marks a new departure in the ministry of our Lord. Previous to that time, indeed, He had taught the people, wrought miracles, gained adherents, and obtained a wide popularity; but after that event, which may be regarded as indicating the failure of John's mission, our Lord retired into Galilee, and there entered upon a new phase of His public ministry. We are told that 'from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. iv. 17). These are the precise terms in which the preaching of John the Baptist is described (Matt. iii. 2). Both our Lord and His forerunner called 'the nation to repentance,' and announced the approach of the 'kingdom of heaven.' It follows that John could not mean by the phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' merely that the Messiah was about to appear, for when Christ did appear, He made the same announcement. 'The kingdom of heaven is *at hand*.' In like manner, when the twelve disciples were sent forth on their first evangelistic mission, they were commanded to preach, not that the kingdom of heaven was come, but that it was *at hand* (Matt. x. 7). Moreover, that the kingdom did not come in our Lord's time, nor at the day of Pentecost, is evident from the fact that in His prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives our Lord gave His disciples certain tokens by which they might know that the kingdom of God was nigh at hand (Luke xxi. 31).

We find, therefore, the following conclusions plainly deducible from our Lord's teaching:

1. That a great crisis, or consummation, called 'the kingdom of heaven, or of God,' was proclaimed by Him to be nigh.
2. That this consummation, though near, was not to take place in His own lifetime, nor yet for some years after His death.
3. That His disciples, or at least some of them, might expect to witness its arrival.

But the whole subject of 'the kingdom of heaven' must be reserved for fuller discussion at a future period.

PREDICTION OF COMING WRATH UPON THAT GENERATION

There is another point of resemblance between the preaching of our Lord and that of John the Baptist. Both gave the clearest intimations of the near approach of a time of judgment which should overtake the existing generation, on account of their rejection of the warnings and invitations of divine mercy. As the Baptist spoke of 'the coming wrath,' so our Lord with equal distinctness forewarned the people of 'coming judgment.' He upbraided 'the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not,' and predicted that a heavier woe would overtake them than had fallen upon Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrha (Matt. xi. 20-24). That all this points to a catastrophe which was not remote, but near, and which would actually overtake the existing generation, appears evident from the express statements of Jesus.

Matt. xii. 38-46 (compare Luke xi. 16, 24-36): 'Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with generation, and condemn it, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. When the unclean spirit is gone out

THE PAROUSIA JAMES STUART RUSSELL
of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.’

This passage is of great importance in ascertaining the true meaning of the phrase ‘this generation’ [genea]. It can only refer, in this place, to the people of Israel then living- the existing generation. No commentator has ever proposed to call ‘genea’ here the Jewish race in all ages. Our Lord was accustomed to speak of His contemporaries as *this generation*:

Whereunto shall I liken this generation?’- that is, the men of that day who would listen neither to His forerunner nor to Himself’ (Matt. xi. 16; Luke vii. 31). Even commentators like Stier, who contend for the rendering of ‘genea’ by *race* or *lineage in* other passages, admit that the reference in these words is ‘to the generation living in that then extant and most important age.’¹ So in the passage before us there can be no controversy respecting the application of the words exclusively to the then existing generation, the contemporaries of Christ. Of the aggravated and enormous wickedness of that period our Lord here testifies. The generation has just before been addressed by Him in the very words of the Baptist- ‘O brood of vipers’ (ver. 34). Its guilt is declared to surpass that of the heathen; it is likened to a demoniac, from whom the unclean spirit had departed for a while, but returned in greater force than before, accompanied by seven other spirits more wicked than himself, so that ‘the last state of that man is worse than that first.’ We have in the testimony of Josephus a striking confirmation of our Lord’s description of the moral condition of that generation. ‘As it were impossible to relate their enormities in detail, I shall briefly state that no other city ever endured similar calamities, and no generation ever existed more prolific in crime. They confessed themselves

1 Reden Jesu, in loc

to be, what they were- slaves, and the very dregs of society, the spurious and polluted spawn of the nation.’² ‘And here I cannot refrain from expressing what my feelings suggest. I am of opinion, that had the Romans deferred the punishment of these wretches, either the earth would have opened and swallowed up the city, or it would have been swept away by a deluge, or have shared the same destruction as the land of Sodom. For it produced a race far more ungodly than those who were thus visited. For through the desperate madness of these men the whole nation was involved in their ruin.’³

‘That period had somehow become so prolific in iniquity of every description amongst the Jews, that no work of evil was left unperpetrated; . . . so universal was the contagion, both in public and private, and such the emulation to surpass each other in acts of impiety towards God, and of injustice towards their neighbors.’⁴

Such was the fearful condition to which the nation was hastening when our Lord uttered these prophetic words. The climax had not yet been reached, but it was full in view. The unclean spirit had not yet returned to his house, but he was on the way. As Stier remarks, ‘In the period between the ascension of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem, especially towards the end of it, this nation shows itself, one might say, as if possessed by seven thousand devils.’⁵ Is not this an adequate and complete fulfilment of our Saviour’s prediction? Have we the slightest warrant or need for saying that it means something else, or something more, than this? What presence is there for supposing a further and future fulfilment of His words? Is it not a virtual discrediting of the prophecy to seek any other than the plain and obvious sense which points so distinctly to an approaching catastrophe about to befall that generation? Surely we show most reverence to the Word of God when we accept implicitly its obvious teaching, and refuse the unwarranted and merely human speculations which critics and theologians have drawn from their own fancy. We conclude, then, that, in the notorious profligacy of that age, and the signal calamities which before its close overwhelmed the Jewish people, we have the historical attestation of the exhaustive fulfilment of this prophecy.

2 Jewish War, bk v. c. x sec. 5. Traill’s translation.

3 Ibid. G. Xiii. sec. 6.

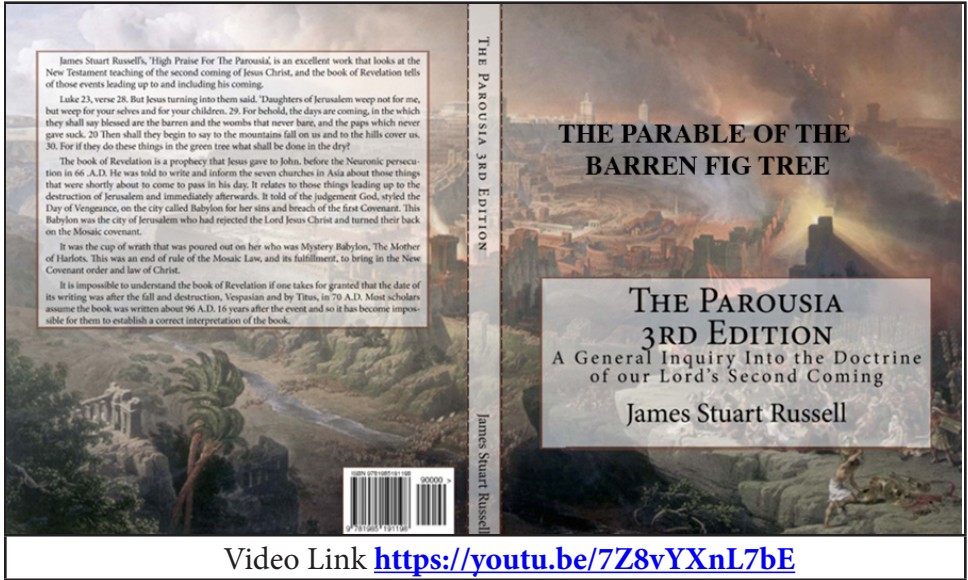
4 Ibid. bk. vii. c. viii. sec. I.

5 sec. Reden Jesu; Matt. xii, 43-45.

Luke xiii. 1-9 : ‘There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’

How vividly our Lord apprehended the approaching calamities of the nation, and how clear and distinct His warnings were, may be inferred from this passage. The massacre of some Galileans who had gone up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover, either by the command, or with the connivance of the Roman governor; and the sudden destruction of eighteen persons by the fall of a tower near the pool of Siloam, were incidents which formed the topics of conversation among the people at the time. Our Lord declares that the victims of these calamities were not exceptionally wicked, but that a *like fate* would overtake the very persons now talking about them, unless they repented. The point of His observation, which is often overlooked, lies in the *similarity* of the threatened destruction. It is not ‘ye *also* shall all perish,’ but, ‘ye shall all perish in *‘the same manner’*’. That our Lord had in view the final ruin, which was about to overwhelm Jerusalem and the nation, can hardly be doubted. The analogy between the cases is real and striking. It was at the feast of the Passover that the population of Judea had crowded into Jerusalem, and were there cooped in by the legions of Titus. Josephus tells us how, in the final agony of the siege, the blood of the officiating priests was shed at the altar of sacrifice. The Roman soldiers were the executioners of the divine judgment; and as temple and tower fell to the ground, they buried in their ruins many a hapless victim of impenitence and unbelief. It is satisfactory to find both Alford and Stier recognising the historical allusion in this passage. The former remarks: the force of which is lost in the English version “likewise,” should be rendered “*in like manner*,” as indeed the Jewish people did perish by the sword of the Romans.⁶

6 Greek Test. in loc.



The Parable of the Barren Fig-tree

Luke xiii. 6-9: 'He spake also this parable: A certain man had a figtree planted in his vineyard: and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.'

The same prophetic significance is manifest in this parable, which is almost the counterpart of that in Isa. v., both in form and meaning. The true interpretation is so obvious as to render explanation scarcely necessary. Its bearing on the people of Israel is most distinct and direct, more especially when viewed in connection with the preceding warnings. Israel is the fruitless tree, long cultivated, but yielding no return to the owner. It was now on its last trial: the axe, as John the Baptist had declared, was laid to the root of the tree; but the fatal blow was delayed at the intercession of mercy. The Saviour was even then at His gracious work of nurture and culture; a little longer, and the decree would go forth- 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?'

No doubt there are general principles in this, as in other parables, applicable to all nations and all ages; but we must not lose sight of its original

8 THE PAROUSIA JAMES STUART RUSSELL
and primary reference to the Jewish people. Stier and Alford seem to lose themselves in searching for recondite and mystical meanings in the minor details of the imagery; but Neander gives a luminous explanation of its true import: 'As the fruitless tree, failing to realize the aim of its being, was destroyed, so the theocratic nation, for the same reason, was to be overtaken, after long forbearance, by the judgments of God, and shut out from His kingdom.'⁷

END OF THE AGE, OR CLOSE OF JEWISH DISPENSATION

Parables of the Tares, and of the Drag-net

Matt. xiii. 36-47: 'Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, he that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world [age]; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be at the end of this world [age]. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a [the] furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.... Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was east into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to the shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world [age]: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'

We find in the passages here quoted an example of one of those erroneous renderings which have done much to confuse and mislead the ordinary readers of our English version. It is probable, that ninety-nine in every hundred understand by the phrase, 'the end of the world,' the close of

7 Greek Test. in loc.

human history, and the destruction of the material earth. They would not imagine that the ‘ world ‘ in ver. 38 and the ‘world’ in ver. 39 40, are totally different words, with totally different meanings. Yet such is the fact. *Koinos* in ver. 38 is rightly translated *world*, and refers to the world of men, but *aeon* in ver. 39, 40, refers to a *period of time*, and should be rendered *age* or *epoch*. Lange translates it *aeon*. It is of the greatest importance to understand correctly the two meaning of this word, and of the phrase ‘*the end of the aeon, or age.*’ *aion* is, as we have said, a period of time, or an age. It is exactly equivalent to the Latin word *aevum*, which is merely *aion* in a Latin dress; and the phrase, (Greek- coming), translated in our English version, ‘the end of the world,’ should be, ‘the close of the age.’ Tittman observes: (Greek - coming), as it occurs in the New Testament, does not denote the end, but rather the consummation, of the *aeon*, which is to be followed by a new age. So in Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 49; xxiv. 3; which last passage, it is to be feared, may be misunderstood in applying it to the destruction of the world.’⁸ It was the belief of the Jews that the Messiah would introduce a new aeon: and this new aeon, or age, they called ‘the kingdom of heaven.’ The existing aeon: therefore, was the Jewish dispensation, which was now drawing to its close; and how it would terminate our Lord impressively shows in these parables. It is indeed surprising that expositors should have failed to recognize in these solemn predictions the reproduction and reiteration of the words of Malachi and of John the Baptist. Here we find the same final separation between the righteous and the wicked; the same purging of the floor; the same gathering of the wheat into the garner; the same burning of the chaff [tares, stubble] in the fire. Can there be a doubt that it is to the same act of judgment, the same period of time, the same historical event, that Malachi, John, and our Lord refer ?

But we have seen that John the Baptist predicted a judgment which was then impending - a catastrophe so near that already the axe was lying at the root of the trees,- in accordance with the prophecy of Malachi, that ‘the great and dreadful day of the Lord’ was to follow on the coming of the second Elijah. We are therefore brought to the conclusion, that this discrimination between the righteous and the wicked, this gathering of the wheat into the garner, and burning of the tares in the furnace of fire, refer to the same catastrophe, viz., the wrath which came upon that very generation, when Jerusalem became literally ‘a furnace of fire,’ and the aeon of Judaism came to a close in ‘the great and dreadful day of the Lord.’

This conclusion is supported by the fact, that there is a close connection

8 Synonyms of the New Test. vol. i. a. 70; Bib. Cab.
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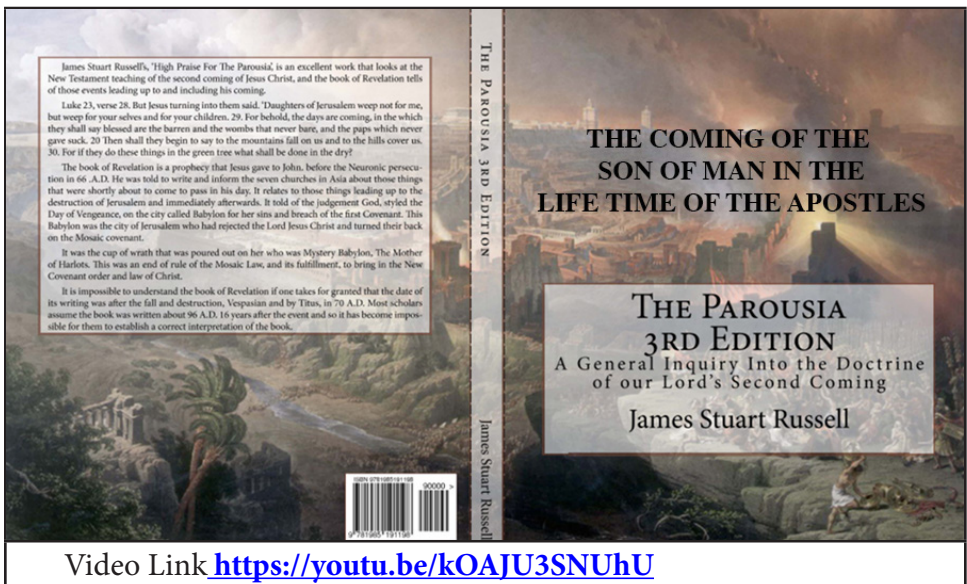
between this great judicial epoch and the coming of 'the kingdom of heaven.' Our Lord represents the separation of the righteous and the wicked as the characteristic of the great consummation which is called 'the kingdom of God.' But the kingdom was declared to be *at hand*. It follows, therefore, that the parables before us relate, not to a remote event still in the future, but to one which in our Saviour's time was near.

An additional argument in favour of this view is derived from the consideration that our Lord, in His explanation of the parable of the tares, speaks of *Himself* as the sower of the good seed: 'He that soweth the good seed is the *Son of man*.' It is to *His own personal ministry* and its results that He refers, and we must therefore regard the parable as having a special bearing upon His contemporaries. It is in perfect harmony with His solemn warning in Luke xiii. 26, where He describes the condemnation of those who were privileged to enjoy *His personal presence and ministrations*, the pretenders to discipleship, who were tares and not wheat. 'Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God; and you yourselves thrust out.' However applicable to men in general under the gospel such language may be, it is plain that it had a direct and specific bearing upon the contemporaries of our Lord - the generation that witnessed His miracles and heard His parables; and that it has a relation to them such as it can have to none else.

We find at the conclusion of the parable of the tares an impressive *nota bene*, drawing special attention to the instruction therein contained: 'Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.' We may take occasion from this to make a remark on the vast importance of a true conception of the period at which our Lord and His apostles taught. This is indispensable to the correct understanding of the New Testament doctrine respecting the 'kingdom of God,' the 'end of the age,' and the 'coming aeon,' or 'world to come. That period was near the close of the Jewish dispensation. The Mosaic economy, as it is called - the system of laws and institutions given to the nation by God Himself, and which had existed for more than forty generations,- was about to be superseded and to pass away. Already the last generation that was to possess the land was upon the scene,- the last and also the worst, -the child and heir of its predecessors. The long period, during which Jehovah had exhausted all the methods which divine wisdom and love could devise for the culture and reformation of Israel, was about to come to an end. It was to close disastrously. The wrath, long pent up and restrained, was to burst forth

and overwhelm *that generation*. Its 'last day' was to be a *dies irae* 'the great and terrible day of the Lord.' This is 'the end of the age,' so often referred to by our Lord, and constantly predicted by His apostles. Already they stood within the penumbra of that tremendous crisis, which was every day advancing nearer and nearer, and which was at last to come suddenly, 'as a thief in the night.' This is the true explanation of those constant exhortations to vigilance, patience, and hope, which abound in the apostolic epistles. They lived expecting a consummation which was to arrive in their own time, and which they might witness with their own eyes. This fact lies on the very face of the New Testament writings; it is the key to the interpretation of much that would otherwise be obscure and unintelligible, and we shall see in the progress of this investigation how consistently this view is supported by the whole tenor of the New Testament Scriptures.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (THE PAROUSIA) In The Life Time OF THE APOSTLES



Matt. x. 23.

'But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.'

In this passage we find the earliest distinct mention of that great event which we shall find so frequently alluded to henceforth by our Lord and

His apostles, viz., His coming again, or the Parousia. It may indeed be a question, as we shall presently see, whether this passage properly belongs to this portion of the gospel history.⁹ But waiving for the moment this question, let us inquire what the *coming* here spoken of is. Can it mean, as Lange suggests, that Jesus was to follow so quickly on the heels of His messengers in their evangelistic circuit as to overtake them before it was completed? Or does it refer, as Stier and Alford think, to two different comings, separated from each other by thousands of years: the one comparatively near, the other indefinitely remote? Or shall we, with Michaelis and Meyer, accept

9 There is a real difficulty in this passage which ought not to be overlooked. It seems unaccountable that our Lord, on an occasion like this, when He was sending forth the twelve on a short mission, apparently within a limited district, and from which they were to return to Him in a short time, should speak of His coming as overtaking them before the completion of their task. It seems scarcely appropriate to the particular period, and to belong more properly to a subsequent charge, viz., that recorded in the discourse spoken on the Mount of Olives (Matt. xxiv.; Mark xiii.; Luke xxi). Indeed, a comparison of these passages will go far to satisfy any candid mind that the whole paragraph Matt. x. 16-23) is transposed from its original connection, and inserted in our Lord's first charge to His disciples. We find the very words relating to the persecution of the apostles, their being delivered up to the councils, their being scourged in the synagogues, brought before governors and kings, etc., which are recorded in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew, assigned by St. Mark and St. Luke to a subsequent period, viz., the discourse on the Mount of Olives. There is no evidence that the disciples met with such treatment on their first evangelistic tour. There is therefore as strong evidence as the nature of the case will admit, that ver. 23 and its context belong to the discourse on the Mount of Olives. This would remove the difficulty which the passage presents in the connection in which we here find it, and give a coherence and consistency to the language, which, as it stands, it is not easy to discover. It is an admitted fact that even the Synoptical Gospels do not relate all events in precisely the same order; there most therefore be greater chronological accuracy in one than in another. Stier says: 'Matthew is careless of chronology in details' (Reden Jesu, vol. iii. p. US). Neander, speaking on this very charge, says: 'Matthew evidently connects many things with the instructions given to the apostles in view of their first journey, which chronologically belong later;' (Life of Christ, _ 174, note b); and again, speaking of the charge given to the seventy, as recorded by St. Luke: 'he says, 'The entire and characteristic coherency of everything spoken by Christ, according to Luke, with the circumstances (so superior to the collocation of Matthew),' etc. (Life of Christ, _ 204, note 1). Dr. Blaikie observes: 'It is generally understood that Matthew arranged his narrative more by subjects and places than by chronology' (Bible History, p. 372).

There seems, therefore, abundant warrant for assigning the important prediction contained in Matt. x. 23 to the discourse delivered on the Mount of Olives

the plain and obvious meaning which the words themselves suggest? The interpretation of Lange is surely inadmissible. Who can doubt that 'the coming of the Son of man' is here, what it is everywhere else, the formula by which the Parousia, the second coming of Christ, is expressed? This phrase has a definite and constant signification, as much as His crucifixion, or His resurrection, and admits of no other interpretation in this place. But may it not have a double reference: first, to the impending judgment of Jerusalem; and, secondly, to the final destruction of the world,- the former being regarded as symbolical of the latter? Alford contends for the double meaning, and is severe upon those who hesitate to accept it. He tells us what He thinks Christ *meant*; but on the other hand we have to consider what He *said*. Are the advocates of a double sense sure that He meant more than He said? Look at His words. Can anything be more specific and definite as to persons, place, time, and circumstance, than this prediction of our Lord? It is to the *twelve* that he speaks; it is the cities of *Israel* which they are to evangelize; the subject is His own *speedy coming*; and the *time* so near, that before their work is complete His coming will take place. But if we are to be told that this is not the meaning, nor the half of it, and that it includes another coming, to other evangelists, in other ages, and in other lands - a coming which, after eighteen centuries, is still future, and perhaps remote,- then the question arises: What may not Scripture mean? The grammatical sense of words no longer suffices for interpretation; Scripture is a conundrum to be guessed-an oracle that utters ambiguous responses; and no man can be sure, without a special revelation, that he understands what he reads. We are disposed, therefore, to agree with Meyer, that this twofold reference is 'nothing but a forced and unnatural evasion,' and the words simply mean what they' say - that before the apostles completed their life-work of evangelizing the land of Israel, the coming of the Lord should take place.

This is the view of the passage which is taken by Dr. E. Robinson.¹⁰ 'The coming alluded to is the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish nation; and the meaning is, that the apostles would barely have time, before the catastrophe came, to go over the land warning the people to save themselves from the doom of an untoward generation; so that they could not well afford to tarry in any locality after its inhabitants had heard and rejected the message.'

THE PAROUSIA TO TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE LIFE TIME OF SOME OF THE DISCIPLES

¹⁰ See note In Harmony of the Four Gospels. 11. The training of the Twelve, p. 117

<p>Matt. xvi. 27,28</p> <p>‘For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward man according to his works.</p> <p>‘Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of,’ till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.’</p>	<p>Mark viii. 38; ix.1.</p> <p>Whosoever therefore shall be’ ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful every generation; of him also shall also the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.</p> <p>And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you. That there be some of them that stand here, which not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom God come with power.’</p>	<p>Luke ix. 26,27.</p> <p>For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.</p> <p>But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till,they see the kingdom of God</p>
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This remarkable declaration is of the greatest importance in this discussion, and may be regarded as the key to the right interpretation of the New Testament doctrine of the Parousia. Though it cannot be said that there are any special difficulties in the language, it has greatly perplexed the commentators, who are much divided in their explanations. It is surely unnecessary to ask what is the *coming of the Son of man* here predicted. To suppose that it refers merely to the glorious manifestation of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, though an hypothesis which has great names to support it, is so palpably inadequate as an interpretation that it scarcely requires refutation. The same remark will apply to the comments of Dr. Lange, who supposes it to have been partially fulfilled by the resurrection of Christ. His exegesis is so curious an illustration of the shifts to which the advocates of a double- sense theory of interpretation are compelled to resort to, as to deserve quotation. ‘In our opinion,’ he says,¹¹ ‘it is necessary to distinguish between the advent of Christ in the glory of His kingdom within the circle of His disciples, and that same advent as applying to the world generally and for judgment. The latter is what is generally understood by the second advent: the former took place when the Saviour rose from the dead and revealed Himself in the midst of His disciples. Hence the meaning of the words of Jesus is: the moment is close at hand when your hearts shall be set at rest by the manifestation of My glory; nor will it be the lot of all who stand here to die during the interval. The Lord might have said that only two of that circle would die till then, viz., Himself and Judas. But in His wisdom He chose the expression, “Some standing here shall not taste of death,” to give them exactly that measure of hope and

11 No entry

earnest expectation which they needed.'¹²

It is enough to say that such an interpretation of our Saviour's words could never have entered into the minds of those who heard them. It is so far-fetched, intricate, and artificial, that it is discredited by its very ingenuity. But neither does the interpretation satisfy the requirements of the language. How could the resurrection of Christ be called His coming in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels, in His kingdom, and to judgment? Or how can we suppose that Christ, speaking of an event which was to take place in about twelve months, would say, 'Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see' it? The very form of the expression shows that the event spoken of could not be within the space of a few months, or even a few years: it is a mode of speech which suggests that not *all* present will live to see the event spoken of; that not *many* will do so; but that *some* will. It is exactly such a way of speaking as would suit an interval of thirty or forty years, when the majority of the persons then present would have passed away, but some would survive and witness the event referred to.

Alford and Stier more reasonably understand the passage as referring 'to the destruction of Jerusalem and the full manifestation of the kingdom of Christ by the annihilation of the Jewish polity,' though both embarrass and confuse their interpretation by the hypothesis of an occult and ulterior allusion to another 'final coming,' of which the destruction of Jerusalem was the 'type and earnest.' Of this, however, no hint nor intimation is given either by Christ Himself, or by the evangelists. It cannot, indeed, be denied that occasionally our Lord uttered ambiguous language. He said to the Jews: 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (John ii. 19); but the evangelist is careful to add: 'But he spake of the temple of his body.' So when Jesus spoke of 'rivers of living water flowing from the heart of the believer,' St. John adds an explanatory note: 'This spake he of the spirit,' etc. (John vii. 36). Again, when the Lord alluded to the manner of His own death, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth,' etc., the evangelist adds: 'This he said, signifying what death he should die' (John ix. 33). It is reasonable to suppose, therefore that had the evangelists known of a deeper and hidden meaning in the predictions of Christ, they would have given some intimation to that effect; but they say nothing to lead us to infer that their apparent meaning is not their full and true meaning. There is, in fact; no ambiguity whatever as to the *coming* referred to in the passage now under consideration. It is not one of several possible comings; but the one, sole, supreme event, so frequently predicted by our Lord, so constantly expected by His disciples. It is His

12 Large, Comm. on St. Matt. in loc.

coming in glory; His coming to judgment; His coming in His kingdom; the coming of the kingdom of God. It is not a process, but an act. It is not the same thing as 'the destruction of Jerusalem,'- that is another event related and contemporaneous; but the two are not to be confounded. The New Testament knows of only one Parousia, one coming in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is altogether an abuse of language to speak of several senses in which Christ may be said to come, -- as at His own resurrection; at the day of Pentecost; at the destruction of Jerusalem; at the death of a believer; and at various providential epochs. This is not the usage of the New Testament, nor is it accurate language in any point of view. This passage alone contains so much important truth respecting the Parousia, that it may be said to cover the whole ground; and, rightly used, will be found to be a key to the true interpretation of the New Testament doctrine on this subject.

We conclude then:

1. That the coming here spoken of is the Parousia, the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. That the manner of His coming was to be *glorious* -' in his own glory; 'in the glory of his Father; " with the holy angels.'

3. That the object of His coming was to judge that 'wicked and adulterous generation ' (Mark viii. 38), and ' to reward every' man according to his works.'

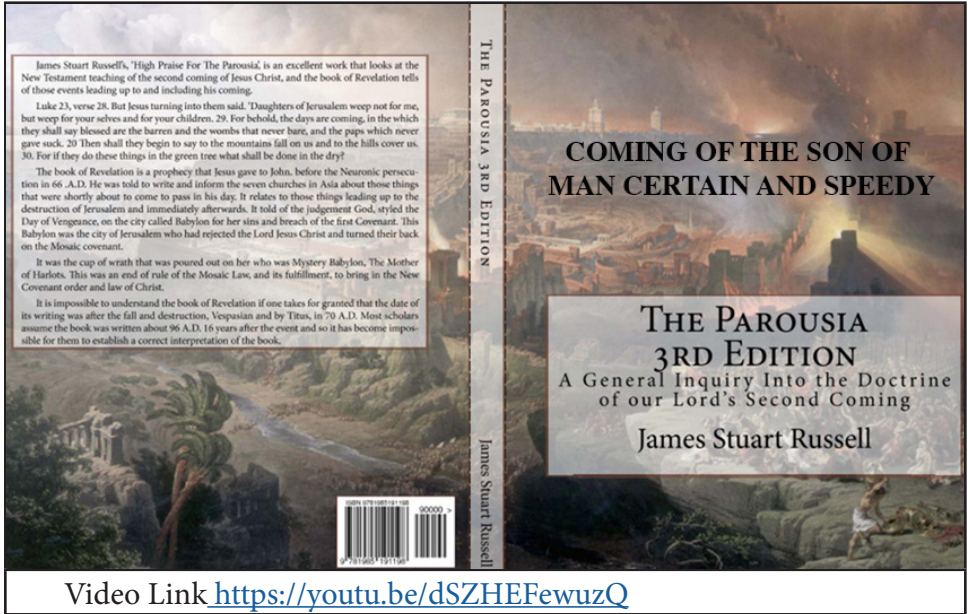
4. That His coming would be the consummation of 'the kingdom of God;' the close of the aeon; 'the coming of the kingdom of God with power.'

5. That this coming was expressly declared by our Saviour to be *near*. Lange justly remarks that the words, are 'emphatically placed at the beginning of the sentence; not a simple future, but meaning, The event is impending that He shall come; He is about to come.'¹³

6. That some of those who heard our Lord utter this prediction were to live to witness the event of which He spoke, viz., His coming in glory.

The inference therefore is, that the Parousia, or glorious coming of Christ, was declared by Himself to fall within the limits of the then existing generation,- a conclusion which we shall find in the sequel to be abundantly justified.

13 Family Expos. on Luke xviii. 1-8



Parable of the Importunate Widow

Luke xviii. 1-8: 'And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; get because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth' [in the land] ?

The intensely practical and *present-day* character, if we may so call it, of our Lord's discourses, is a feature of His teaching which, though often overlooked, requires to be steadily kept in view. He spoke to His own people, and to His own times. He was God's messenger to *Israel*; and, while it is most true that His words are for all men and for all time, yet their primary and

direct bearing was upon His own generation. For want of attention to this fact, many expositors have wholly missed the point of the parable before us. It becomes in their hands a vague and indefinite prediction of a vindication of the righteous, in some period more or less remote, but having no special relation to the people and time of our Lord Himself. Assuredly, whatever the parable may be to us or to future ages, it had a close and bearing upon the disciples to whom it was originally spoken. The Lord was about to leave His disciples 'as sheep in the midst of wolves; ' they were to be persecuted and afflicted, hated of all men for their Master's sake; and it might well be that their courage would fail them, and their hearts would faint. In this parable the Saviour encourages them 'to pray always, and not to faint,' by the example of what persevering prayer can do even with man. If the importunity of a poor widow could constrain an unprincipled judge to do her right, how much more would God, the righteous Judge, be moved by the prayers of His own children to redress their wrongs. Without allegorising all the details of the parable, after the manner of some expositors, it is enough to mark its great moral. It is this. The persecuted children of God would he surely and *speedily* avenged. God will vindicate them, and that *speedily*. But when? The point of time is not left indefinite. It is 'when the Son of man cometh.' The Parousia was to be the hour of redress and deliverance to the suffering people of God.

The reflection of our Lord in the close of the eighth verse deserves particular attention. 'Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' We must here revert to the facts already stated with respect to the ministry of John the Baptist. We have seen how dark and ominous was the outlook of the prophet who preached repentance to Israel. He was the precursor of 'the great and terrible day of the Lord;' he was the second Elijah sent to proclaim the coming of Him who would 'smite the land with a curse.' The reflection of our Lord suggests that He foresaw that the repentance which could alone avert the doom of the nation was not to be looked for. There would be no faith in God, in His promises, or in His threatenings. The day of His therefore, would be the 'day of vengeance (Luke xxi. 22).

Doddridge has well apprehended the scope of this parable, and paraphrases the opening verse as follows: 'Thus our Lord discoursed with His disciples of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and for their encouragement under those hardships which they might in the meantime expect, from their unbelieving countrymen or others, He spake a parable, to them, which was intended to inculcate upon them this great truth, that how distressed soever their circumstances might be, they

ought always to pray with faith and perseverance, and not to faint under their trials.' ¹⁴ The following is his paraphrase of ver. 8: ' Yes I say unto you, He will certainly vindicate them; and when He once undertakes it, He will do it speedily too; and this generation of men shall see and feel it to their terror. Nevertheless, when the Son of man, having been put in possession of His glorious kingdom, comes to appear for this important purpose, will He find faith in the land ?' ¹⁵

14 Family Expos. on Luke xviii. 1-8

15 Doddridge has the following note on 'Will he find faith in the land ?' 'It is evident the word often signifies not the earth in general, but some particular land or country; as in Acts vii. 3, 4, 11, and in numberless other places. And the context here limits it to the less extensive signification. The believing Hebrews were evidently in great danger of being wearied out with their persecutions and distresses. Comp. Heb. iii. 12-14; x. 23-39; xii. 1-4; James i. 1-4; ii. 6.'

The interpretation given by the judicious Campbell adds confirmation, if it were needed, needed, to this view of the passage. 'There is a close connection in all that our Lord says on any topic of conversation, which rarely escapes an attentive reader. If in this, as is very probable, He refers to the destruction impending over the Jewish nation, as the judgment of Heaven for their rebellious against God, in rejecting and murdering the Messiah and in persecuting His adherents, (the Greek) must be understood to mean "this belief," or the belief of the particular truth He had been inculcating, namely, that God will in due time avenge His elect, and signally punish their oppressors; and (the Greek) must mean "the land," to wit, of Judea. The words may be translated either way -- earth or land; but the latter evidently gives them a more definite meaning, and unites them more closely with those which preceded, (Campbell on the Gospels, vol. ii. p. 384). The teaching of this instructive parable is by no means exhausted; and we shall find it throw an unexpected light on a very obscure passage, at a future stage of this investigation. Meantime we may refer to 2 Thess. i 4-10, as furnishing a striking commentary on the whole parable, and showing the connection between the Parousia and the avenging of the elect.

i.e. At The Parousia

Video Link <https://youtu.be/mTCPViVWTS0>

Matt. xix. 27-30.	Mark x. 18-31.	Luke xvii. 28-30.
<p>27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold , we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?</p> <p>28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.</p> <p>29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.</p>	<p>Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo I we have left all and followed thee.</p> <p>‘And Jesus answered and Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.’</p>	<p>“Then answered Peter and said’ Lo, we have left have all, and followed thee.</p> <p>And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath house, or parents, or or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.’</p>

To what period are we to assign the event or state here called by our Lord the ‘regeneration’? It is evidently contemporaneous with ‘the Son of man sitting on the throne of his glory;’ nor can there be any question that the two phrases, ‘The Son of man coming in his kingdom,’ and, ‘The Son of

man sitting on the throne of his glory,' both refer to the same thing, and to the same time. That is to say, it is to the Parousia that both these expressions point.

We have another note of time, and another point of coincidence between the 'regeneration' and the Parousia, in the reference made by our Lord to the 'coming age or aeon' as the period when His faithful disciples were to receive their recompense (Mark x.30; Luke xviii. 30). But the 'coming age' was, as we have already seen, to succeed the existing age or aeon, that is to say, the period of the Jewish dispensation, the end of which our Lord declared to be at hand. We conclude, therefore, that the 'regeneration,' the 'coming age,' and the 'Parousia,' are virtually synonymous, or, at all events, contemporaneous. The coming of the Son of man in His kingdom, or in His glory, is distinctly affirmed to be a coming to judgment -- 'to reward every man according to his works (Matt. xvi. 27); and His sitting on the throne of His glory, in the regeneration, is as evidently a sitting in judgment. In this judgment the apostles were to have the honour of being assessors with the Lord, according to His declaration (Luke xxii. 29, 30)- 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' But this glorious coming to judgment is expressly affirmed by our Lord to fall within the limits of the generation then living: 'There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom' (Matt. xvi. 28). It was therefore no long-deferred and distant hope which Jesus held out to His disciples. It was not a prospect that is still seen afar off in the dim perspective of an indefinite futurity. St. Peter and his fellow-disciples were fully aware that 'the kingdom of heaven' was at hand. They had learned it from their first teacher in the wilderness; they had been reassured of it by their Lord and Master; they had gone through Galilee proclaiming the truth to their countrymen. When the Lord, therefore, promised, that in the coming aeon His apostles should sit upon thrones, is inconceivable that He could mean that ages upon ages, centuries upon centuries, and even millennium upon millennium must slowly roll away before they should reap their promised honours? Are the inheritance of 'everlasting life' and the 'sitting upon twelve thrones' still among 'the things hoped for but not seen' by the disciples? Surely such a hypothesis refutes itself. The promise would have sounded like mockery to the disciples had they been told that the performance would be so long delayed. On the other hand, if we conceive of the 'regeneration' as contemporaneous with the Parousia, and the Parousia, with the close of the Jewish age and the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, we have a definite point of time, not far distant, but almost

within the sight of living men, when the predicted judgment of the enemies of Christ, and the glorious recompense of His friends, would come to pass.

PROPHETIC INTIMATIONS OF THE APPROACHING CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

I. - The Parable of the Pounds

Luke xix. 11-27: 'And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art all austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was all austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto thee, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and stay them before me.'

It cannot fail to strike every attentive reader of the Gospel history, how much the teaching of our Lord, as He approached the close of His ministry, dwelt upon the theme of coming judgment. When He spoke this parable, He was on His way to Jerusalem to keep His last Passover before He suffered; and it is remarkable how His discourses from this time seem almost wholly

engrossed, not by His own approaching death, but the impending catastrophe of the nation. Not Only this parable of the pounds, but His lamentation over Jerusalem (Luke xix. 41) ; His cursing of the fig-tree (Matt. xxi. Mark xi.) ; the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. xxi. Mark xii.; Luke xx.); the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matt. xxii.); the woes pronounced) upon that generation' (Matt. xxiii. 29-36) ; the second lamentation over Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38) ; and the prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, with the parables and parabolic illustrations appended thereto by St. Matthew, all are occupied with this absorbing theme.

The consideration of these prophetic intimations will show that the catastrophe anticipated by our Lord was not a remote event, hundreds and thousands of years distant, but one whose shadow already fell upon that age and that nation ; and that the Scriptures give us no warrant whatever to suppose that anything else, or anything more than this, is included in our Saviour's words.

The parable of the pounds was spoken by our Lord to correct a mistaken expectation on the part of His disciples, that 'the kingdom of God' was about to commence at once. It is not surprising that they should have fallen into this mistake. John the Baptist had announced, 'The kingdom of God is at hand.' Jesus Himself had proclaimed the same fact, and commissioned them to publish it throughout the cities and villages of Galilee. As patriotic Israelites they writhed under the yoke of Rome, and yearned for the ancient liberties of the nation. As pious sons of Abraham they desired to see all nations blessed in him. And there were other less noble sentiments that had a place in their minds. Was not their own Master the Son of David - the coming King? What might not they expect who were His followers and friends? This made them contest with each other the place of honour in the kingdom. This made the sons of Zebedee eager to secure His promise of the most honourable seats, on His right hand and on His left, where he assumed the sovereignty. And now they were approaching Jerusalem. The great national festival of the Passover was at hand; all Israel was flocking, to the Holy City, and there was not a man there but would be eager to see Jesus of Nazareth. What more probable than that the popular enthusiasm would place their Master on the throne of His father David ? As they wished, so they believed ; and 'they thought that the kingdom of God would immediately appear.' But the Lord checked their enthusiastic hopes, and intimated, in a parable, that a certain interval must elapse before the fulfillment of their expectations. Taking a well-known incident from recent Jewish history as the groundwork of the parable- viz., the journey of Archelaus to Rome, in order to seek from the emperor the succession to the dominions of his father, Herod the Great, he

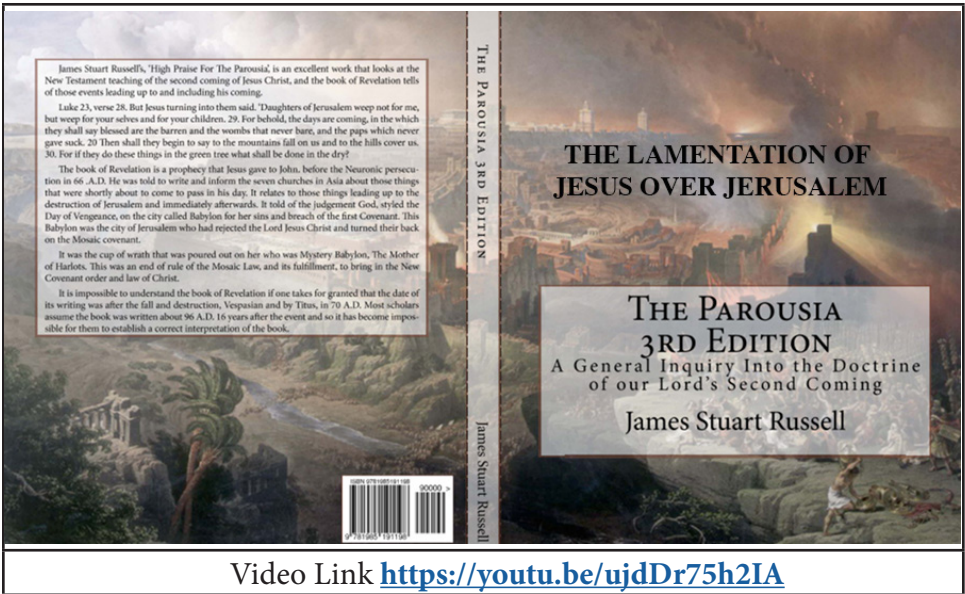
employed it as an apt illustration of His own departure from earth, and His subsequent return in glory. Meanwhile, during the period of His absence, He gave His servants a charge to keep- 'Occupy till I come.' It was for them to be diligent and faithful, until their Lord's return, when the loyal servants should be applauded and rewarded, and His enemies utterly destroyed.

Nothing can be better than Neander's explanation of this parable, though, indeed, it may be said to explain itself. Nevertheless, it may be well to subjoin his observations. "In this parable, in view of the circumstances under which it was uttered, and of the approaching catastrophe, special intimations are given of Christ's departure from the earth, of His ascension, and return to judge the rebellious theocratic nation, and consummate His dominion. It describes a great man, who travels to the distant court of the mighty emperor, to receive from him authority over his countrymen, and to return with royal power. So Christ was not immediately recognised in His kingly office, but first had to depart from the earth. and leave His agents to advance His kingdom, to ascend into heaven and be appointed theocratic king, and return a 'gain to exercise His contested power.'" ¹⁶

Such is the teaching of the parable of the pounds. But though the kingdom of God was not to appear at the precise time which the disciples anticipated, it does not follow that it was postponed since he, and that the expected consummation would not take place for hundreds and thousands of years. This would be to falsify the most express declarations of Christ and of His forerunner. How could they have said that the kingdom was at hand, if it was not to appear for ages?

How could an event be said to be near, if it was actually further off than the whole period of the Jewish economy from Moses to Christ? The kingdom might still be at hand, though not so near as the disciples supposed. It was expedient that their Lord should 'go away,' but only for 'a little while,' when He would come again to them, and come 'in His kingdom.' This was the hope in which they lived, the faith which they preached; and we cannot think that their faith and hope were a delusion.

16 Life of Christ, sec. 239.



II.-Lamentation of Jesus over Jerusalem

Luke xix. 41-44: ‘ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.’

Here we are upon ground which is not debatable. This prophecy is clear and perspicuous as history. No advocate of the double-sense theory of interpretation has proposed to find here anything but Jerusalem and its approaching desolation.

It is not the conflagration of the earth, nor the dissolution of creation: it is the siege and demolition of the Holy City, and the slaughter of her citizens, as historically fulfilled in less than forty years-only this, and nothing more. But why so? Why should not a double sense be possible here, as well as in the prediction delivered upon the Mount of Olives? The reply will doubtless be, Because here all is homogeneous and consecutive ; the Saviour is looking

on Jerusalem, and speaking of Jerusalem, and predicting an event which was speedily to come to pass. But this is equally the case with the prophecy in Matt. xxiv., where the expositors find, sometimes Jerusalem, and sometimes the world; sometimes the termination of the Jewish polity, and sometimes the conclusion of human history; sometimes the year A.D. 70, and sometimes a period as yet unknown. We shall yet see that the prophecy on the Mount of Olives is no less consecutive, no less homogenous, no less one and indivisible, than this clear and plain prediction of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. If the double-sense theory were good for anything, it would be found equally applicable to the prediction before us. Here, however, its own advocates discard it; for common sense refuses to see in this affecting lamentation anything else than Jerusalem, and Jerusalem alone.

III. - Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

MATT. XXI. 33-46.	MARK XII. 1-12.	LUKE XX. 9-19.
<p>33 There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country : 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?</p>	<p>1 A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country . 2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled . 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some . 6 Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.</p>	<p>9 A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. 11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. 12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. 13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. 14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?</p>

MATT. XXI. 33-46.	MARK XII. 1-12.	LUKE XX. 9-19.
<p>41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.</p>	<p>8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 9 What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard to others.. 10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.</p>	<p>16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall. 19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.</p>

This parable, recorded in almost identical terms by the Synoptics, scarcely requires an interpreter. Its local, personal, and national reference is too manifest to be questioned. The vineyard is the land of Israel; the lord of the vineyard is the Father; His messengers are His servants the prophets; His only and beloved Son is the Lord Jesus Himself; the husbandmen are the rebellious and wicked Jews; the punishment is the coming catastrophe at the Parousia, when, as Neander well expresses it, "the theocratic relation is broken, and the kingdom is transferred to other nations that shall bring forth fruits corresponding to it."¹⁷

The bearing of this parable on the people of our Saviour's time is so direct and explicit, that it might be supposed that no Critic would have to seek for a hidden meaning, or an ulterior reference. The chief priests and Pharisees felt that it was 'spoken against *them*;' and they winced under the lash. As it stands, all is perfectly clear and intelligible; but the exegesis of a theologian can render it turbid and obscure indeed. For example, Lange thus

¹⁷ Life of Christ, sec. 256.

comments upon ver. 41

The Parousia of Christ is consummated in His last coming, but is not one with it. It begins *in principle* with the resurrection. (John xvi. 16) ; continues as a power through the New Testament period (John xiv. 3-19) ; and is *consummated* in the stricter sense in the final advent (I Cor. xv. 23; Matt. xxv. 31 ; 2 Thess. ii., etc.)¹⁸

Here we have not a coming, nor *the* coming of Christ, but no less than three separate and distinct comings, or a coming of three different kinds- a continuous coming which has been going on for nearly two thousand years already, and may go on for two thousand more, for aught we know. But of all this not a hint is given in the text, nor anywhere else. It is a merely human gloss, without a particle of authority from Scripture, and invented in virtue of the double- and triple sense theory of interpretation.

Far more sober is the explanation of Alford. ‘ We may observe that our Lord makes “ when the Lord cometh “ *coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem*, which is incontestably the overthrow of the wicked husbandmen. This passage therefore forms an important key to our Lord’s prophecies, and a decisive justification for those who, like myself, firmly hold that *the coming of the Lord* is, in many places, to be identified, primarily, with that overthrow.”¹⁹

It is to be regretted that this otherwise sound and sensible note is marred by the phrases ‘in many places ‘ and , ‘primarily,’ but it is, nevertheless, all important admission. Undoubtedly we do find here ‘an important key to our Lord’s prophecies; ‘ but the *master key* is that which we have already found in Matt xvi. 27, 28, and which serves to open, not only this, but many other dark sayings in the prophetic oracles.

IV.-Parable of the Marriage of the King’s Son

Matt. xxii. 1-14 -. ‘And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers,

18 Lange on St. Matt. p. 388.

19 Alford, Greek Test. in loc

and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend. how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called but few are chosen.'

This parable bears a strong resemblance to that of 'The Great Supper,' contained in Luke xiv. It is possible that the two parables may be only different versions of the same original. The question, however, does not affect the present discussion, and it cannot be proved that they were not spoken on different occasions. The moral of both is the same; but the character of the parable recorded by St. Matthew is more distinctively eschatological than that of St. Luke. It points clearly to the approaching consummation of the 'kingdom of heaven.' The vengeance taken by the king on the murderers of his servants, and on their city fixes the application to Jerusalem and the Jews. The Roman armies were but the executioners of divine justice; and Jerusalem perished for her guilt and rebellion against her King.

Alford, in his notes on this parable, while recognising a partial and primary reference to Israel and Jerusalem, finds also that it extends far beyond its apparent scope, and is divided into two acts, the first of which is past, and closes with ver. 10; while a new act opens with ver. 11, which is still in the future. This implies that the judgment of Israel and of Jerusalem does not supply a full and exhaustive fulfillment of our Lord's words. On the one hand we have the teaching of Christ Himself- simple, clear, and unambiguous; on the other hand, the conjectural speculation of the critic, without a scintilla of evidence or authority from the Word of God. To expound the parable according to its plain historic significance will be derided by some as shallow, superficial, unspiritual to find in it ulterior and hidden meanings, dark and profound riddles, mystical depths, which none but theologians can explore,- this is critical acumen, keen insight, high spirituality! In our opinion, all this foisting of human hypotheses and double senses into the predictions of our Lord is utterly incompatible with sober criticism, or with true reverence for the Word of God; it is not criticism, but mysticism; and obscures the truth instead of elucidating it. At the risk, then, of being considered superficial and shallow, we shall hold fast to the

plain teaching of the words of Scripture, turning a deaf ear to all fanciful and conjectural speculations of merely human origin, no matter how learned or dignified the quarter from which they come.

V- The Woes denounced on the Scribes and Pharisees

Matt xxiii. 29-36.	Luke xi. 47-51.
<p>29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30 And say , If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34 Wherefore , behold , I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify ; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.</p>	<p>47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute : 50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.</p>

It will be seen that St. Luke gives this passage as spoken in a different connection, and on a different occasion, from those stated by St. Matthew. Whether our Lord spoke the same words on two different occasions, or whether they have been transposed by St. Luke from their original connection, is a question not easy to determine. The former hypothesis does not seem probable, and does not commend itself to the critical mind. Apophthegms, and brief parabolic sayings, such as ‘ Many are called but few are chosen,’ ‘The last shall be first, and the first last,’-may have been repeated on several occasions; but connected and elaborate discourses, such as the Sermon on the Mount, the prophetic discourse upon Olivet, and this denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, can hardly be imagined to have been repeated verbatim on different occasions. It is a mistake, as we have already seen, to look for strict chronological order in the narratives of the Evangelists: it is admitted on all hands that they are accustomed sometimes to group together facts which have a natural relation, quite independently of the order of time in which they occurred.

Stier says of the chronology of St. Luke in general : ‘Two things are sufficiently plain: First, that he mentions individual occurrences without strict regard to chronology, even repeating and Intercalating some things elsewhere recorded,’ etc.

Neander makes the following observation on the passage now before us: ‘As this last discourse given by Matthew contains various passages given by Luke in the table conversation (chap. xi.), so Luke inserts *there* this prophetic announcement, whose proper position is found in Matthew.’²⁰ We cannot, however, agree with Neander’s opinion, that ‘this discourse, as given in Matt. xxiii., contains many passages uttered on other occasions.’²¹ It seems to us impossible to read the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew without perceiving that it is a continuous and connected discourse, spoken at one time, its different parts naturally growing out of and following one another. Its very structure consisting of seven woes²² denounced against the hypocritical pretenders to sanctity, who were the blind guides of the people,-and the solemn occasion on which it was uttered being the final public utterance of our Lord,- irresistibly compel the conclusion that it is a complete whole, and that St. Matthew gives us the original form of the discourse.

But the settlement of this question is not essential to this investigation. Far more important it is to observe how our Lord closes His public ministry in almost the identical terms in which His forerunner addressed the same class: ‘Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?’ This is no fortuitous coincidence : it is evidently the deliberate adoption of the words of the Baptist, when he spoke of the ‘coming wrath.’ Israel had rejected alike the stern call to repentance of the second Elijah, and the tender expostulations of the Lamb of God. The measure of their guilt was almost full, and the ‘day of wrath ‘ was swiftly coming.

But the point which deserves special attention is the particular application of this discourse to the Saviour’s own times : ‘ Verily I say unto you, All *these things shall come upon this generation.*’ ‘ *It shall be required of this generation.*’ Surely there can be no pretence of a primary and a secondary reference here. No expositor will deny that these words have a sole and exclusive application to the generation of the Jewish people then living upon the earth. Even Dorner, who contends most strenuously for a great variety of meanings of the word *genea* [generation], frankly admits that it can only refer here to

20 Life of Christ, sec. 253, note n.

21 Life of Christ, sec. 253, note m.

22 Tischendorf rejects ver. 14,
which is omitted by Cod. Sin. and Vat.

the contemporaries of our Lord: ‘Hoc ipsum hominum aevum.’²³ This is an admission of the greatest importance. It enables us to fix the true meaning of the phrase, ‘This generation,’ Which plays so important a part in several of the predictions of our Lord, and notably in the great prophecy spoken on the Mount of Olives. In the passage before us, the words are incapable of any other application than to the *existing generation* of the Jewish nation, which is represented by our Lord as the heir of all the preceding generations, inheriting the depravity and rebelliousness of the national character, and fated to perish in the deluge of wrath which had been accumulating through the ages, and was at length about to overwhelm the guilty land.

VI. The (second) Lamentation of Jesus over Jerusalem

MATT. xxiii, 37-39.	Luke xiii. 34, 35.
<p>29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.</p>	<p>47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: 50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.</p>

‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen together, even as a hen her brood under her wings and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’

Here, again, we have another example of those discrepancies in the Gospel history which perplex harmonists. St. Luke records this affecting

23 See Dorner’s tractae, De Oratione Christi Eschatologica, p. 41.

apostrophe of our Lord in quite a different connection from St. Matthew. Yet we can scarcely suppose that these *ipsissima verba* were spoken on more than one occasion, namely, that specified by St. Matthew. Dorner says : ‘ That these words (“ Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,” etc.) were spoken by Christ, not where Luke, but where Matthew, places them, the words themselves show; for they were spoken when our Lord was departing from the temple to return to it no more till he came to judgment.”²⁴ Lange says the passage is placed earlier by St. Luke ‘for pragmatic reasons.’ At all events, we may properly regard the words as spoken on the occasion indicated by St. Matthew.

As such their collocation is most suggestive. This pathetic expostulation mitigates the severity of the foregoing denunciations, and closes the public ministry of our Lord with a burst of human tenderness and divine compassion. As Dr. Lange well says: ‘The Lord mourns and laments over His own ruined Jerusalem. . . . His whole pilgrimage on earth was troubled by distress for Jerusalem, like the hen which sees the eagle threatening in the sky, and anxiously seeks to gather her chickens under her wings. With such distress Jesus saw the Roman eagles approach for judgment upon the children of Jerusalem, and sought with the strongest solicitations of love to save them. but in vain. They were like dead children to the voice of maternal love!’²⁵

Need it be said that here is Jerusalem, and Jerusalem alone? There is no ambiguity, no twofold reference, no proximate and ultimate fulfilments conceivable here. One thought, one feeling, one object, filled the heart of Jesus- Jerusalem, the city of God, the loved, the guilty, the doomed! Her fate was now all but sealed, and the heart of our Saviour was wrung with anguish as he bade her a last farewell.

But how are we to understand the closing words, ‘Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord?’ This phrase, ‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,’ is the recognised formula which was employed by the Jews in speaking of the coming of Messiah- the Messianic greeting: equivalent to ‘Hail to the anointed one of God.’ It is generally supposed to have been adopted from Psa. cxviii. 26. There was a time coming, therefore, when such a salutation would be appropriate. The Lord who was leaving the temple would once more return to His temple. More than this, *that same generation would witness that return*. This is plainly implied in the form of our Saviour’s language, ‘ Ye shall not see me again till ye shall say,’ etc.-words which would be deprived

24 Dorner, Orat. Chris. Esch. p. 43

25 Comm. on Matt. p. 416

of half their significance if the persons referred to in the first part of the sentence were not the same as those referred to in the second. Nothing can be more distinct and explicit than the reference throughout to the people of Jerusalem, the contemporaries of Christ. They and He were to meet again ; and the Messiah, the Lord whom they professed to seek so eagerly, would suddenly come to his temple,' according to the saying of Malachi the prophet. They expected that coming as an event to be welcomed with gladness; but it was to be far otherwise. 'Who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ?' That day was to bring the desolation of the house of God, the destruction of their national existence, the outburst of the pent-up wrath of God upon Israel. This was the return, the meeting together again, to which our Saviour here alludes. And is not this the very thing that He had again and again declared ? Had He not a little before said, that 'upon **this generation**' should come the sevenfold woes which He had just pronounced ? (Ver.36.) Had He not solemnly affirmed, that some then living should see the Son of man coming in glory, with His angels, 'to reward every man according to his works' -- that is, coming to judgment ? Is it possible to adopt the strange hypothesis of some commentators of note, that in these words our Lord means that He would never be seen again by those to whom He spoke, until a converted and Christian Israel, in some far distant era of time, was prepared to welcome Him as King of Israel ? This would indeed be to take unwarrantable liberties with the words of Scripture. Our Lord does not say, Ye shall not see me until **they** shall say, or, until **another generation** shall say; but, 'until **ye** shall say,' etc. It by no means follows, that because the Messianic salutation is here quoted, the people who are supposed to use it were qualified to enter into its true significance. Those very words had been shouted by multitudes in the streets of Jerusalem only a day or two before, and yet they were changed into 'Crucify him ! crucify him !' in a very brief space. They simply denote the fact of His coming. The unhappy men to whom our Saviour spoke could not adopt the Messianic greeting in its true and highest sense; **they** would never say, 'Blessed is he,' etc., but they would witness His coming- the coming with which that formula was indissolubly associated, viz., the Parousia.

We contend, then, that we are not only warranted, but compelled, to conclude, that our Lord here refers to His coming to destroy Jerusalem and to close the Jewish age, according to His express declarations, within the period of the then existing generation. History verifies the prophecy. In less than forty years from the time when these words were uttered, Jerusalem and her temple, Judea and her people, were overwhelmed by the deluge of wrath predicted by the Lord. Their land was laid waste; their house was

left desolate; Jerusalem, and her children within her, were engulfed in one common ruin.

VII.-The Prophecy on the Mount of Olives.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN [THE PAROUSIA] BEFORE THE PASSING AWAY OF THAT GENERATION

MATT. XXIV.; MARK XIII.; LUKE XXI.

We now enter upon the consideration of by far the most full and explicit of our Lord's prophetic utterances respecting His coming, and the solemn events connected therewith. The discourse or conversation on the Mount of Olives is the great prophecy of the New Testament, and may be not unfitly styled the Apocalypse of the Gospels. Upon the interpretation of this prophetic discourse will depend the right understanding of the predictions contained in the apostolic writings; for it may almost be said that there is nothing in the Epistles which is not in the Gospels. This prophecy of our Saviour is the great storehouse from which the prophetic statements of the apostles are chiefly derived.

The commonly received view of the structure of this discourse, which is almost taken for granted, alike by expositors and by the generality of readers, is, that our Lord, in answering the question of His disciples respecting the destruction of the temple, mixes up with that event the destruction of the world, the universal judgment, and the final consummation of all things. Imperceptibly, it is supposed, the prophecy slides from the city and temple of Jerusalem, and their impending fate in the immediate future, to another and infinitely more tremendous catastrophe in the far distant and indefinite future. So intermingled, however, are the allusions- now to Jerusalem and now to the world at large; now to Israel and now to the human race ; now to events close at hand and now to events indefinitely remote; that to distinguish and allocate the several references and topics, is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

Perhaps it will be the fairest way of exhibiting the views of those who contend for a double meaning in this predictive discourse, to set forth the scheme or plan of the prophecy proposed by Dr. Lange, and adopted by many expositors of the greatest note.

‘ In harmony with apocalyptic style, Jesus exhibited the judgments of His coming in a series of cycles, each of which depicts the whole futurity, but in such a manner, that with every new cycle the scene seems to approximate to and more closely resemble the final catastrophe. Thus, the first cycle

delineates the whole course of the world down to the end, in its general characteristics (ver. 4-14). The second gives the signs of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and paints this destruction itself as a sign and a commencement of the judgment of the world, which from that day onward proceeds in silent and suppressed days of judgment down to the last (ver. 15-28). The third describes the sudden end of the world, and the judgment which ensues (ver. 29-44). Then follows a series of parables and similitudes, in which the Lord paints the judgment itself, which unfolds itself in an organic succession of several acts. In the last act Christ reveals His universal judicial majesty. Chap. xxiv. 45-51 exhibits the judgment upon the servants of Christ, or the clergy. Chap. xxv. 1- 13 (the wise and foolish virgins) exhibits the judgment upon the Church, or the people. Then follows the judgment on the individual members of the Church (ver. 14-30). Finally, ver. 31-46 introduce the universal judgment of the world.’²⁶

Not very dissimilar is the scheme proposed by Stier, who finds three different comings of Christ ‘ which perspectively cover each other: ‘

‘1. The coming of the Lord to judgment upon Judaism.

2. His coming to judgment upon degenerate anti-Christian Christendom.

3. His coming to judgment upon all heathen nations- the final judgment of the world, all which together are the coming again of Christ, and in respect of their similarity and diversity are most exactly recorded from the mouth of Christ by Matthew.’²⁷

Such is the elaborate and complicated scheme adopted by some expositors; but there are obvious and grave objections to it, which, the more they are considered, will appear the more formidable, if not fatal.

1. An objection may be taken, *in limine*, to the principles involved in this method of interpreting Scripture. Are we to look for double, triple, and multiple meanings, for prophecies within prophecies, and mysteries wrapt in mysteries, where we might reasonably have expected a plain answer to a plain question ? Call any one be sure of understanding the Scriptures if they are thus enigmatical and obscure? Is this the manner in which the Saviour taught His disciples, leaving them to grope their way through intricate labyrinths, irresistibly suggestive of the Ptolemaic astronomy - ‘Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb’? Surely so ambiguous and obscure a revelation can

²⁶ Lange, Comm. on Matt. p. 418

²⁷ Stier. Red. Jes. vol. iii. 251.

hardly be called a revelation at all, and seems far more befitting a Delphic Oracle, or a Cumaean Sibyl than the teaching of Him whom the common people heard gladly.²⁸

2. It will scarcely be pretended that, if the exposition of Lange, and Stier be correct, the disciples who listened to the sayings of Jesus on the Mount of Olives could have comprehended or followed the drift of His discourse. They were at all times slow to understand their Master's words; but it would be to give them credit for astonishing penetration to suppose that they were able to thread their way through such a maze of comings, extending through 'a series of cycles, each of which depicts the whole futurity, but in such a manner that with every new cycle the scene seems to approximate to, and more closely resemble, the final catastrophe.'

It is not easy for the ordinary reader to follow the ingenious critic through his convoluted scheme; but it is plain that the disciples must have been hopelessly bewildered amidst a rush of crises and catastrophes from the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the world. Perhaps we shall be told, however, that it does not signify whether the disciples understood our Lord's answer or not: it was not to them that He was speaking; it was to future ages, to generations yet unborn, who were destined, however, to find the interpretation of the prophecy as embarrassing to them as it was to the original bearers. There are no words too strong to repudiate such a suggestion. The disciples came to their Master with a plain, straightforward inquiry, and it is incredible that He would mock them with an unintelligible riddle for a reply. It is to be presumed that the Saviour meant His disciples to understand His words, and it is to be presumed that they did understand them.

3. The interpretation which we are considering appears to be founded upon a misapprehension of the question put to our Lord by the disciples, as well as of His answer to their question. It is generally assumed that the disciples came to our Lord with three different questions, relating to different events separated from each other by a long interval of time; that the first inquiry, 'When shall *these things* be?' - had reference to the approaching destruction of the temple; that the second and third question-, 'What shall be the sign of *thy coming*, and of the *end of the world*?' - referred to events long posterior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and, in fact, not yet accomplished. It is supposed that our Lord's reply conforms itself to this threefold inquiry, and that this gives the shape to His whole discourse. Now, let it be considered how utterly improbable it is that the disciples should have had any such scheme of the future mapped out in their minds. We know that they had just been shocked and stunned by their Master's prediction of the

28 See Note A, Part I., on the Double-sense Theory of Interpretation

total destruction of the glorious house of God on which they had so recently been gazing with admiration. They had not yet had time to recover from their surprise, when they came to Jesus with the inquiry, 'When shall these things be ?' etc. Is it not reasonable to suppose that *one* thought possessed them at that moment- the portentous calamity awaiting the magnificent structure, the glory and beauty of Israel ? Was that a time when their minds would be occupied with a distant future? Must not their whole soul have been concentrated on the fate of the temple? and must they not have been eager to know what tokens would be given of the approach of the catastrophe? Whether they connected in their imagination the destruction of the temple with the dissolution of the creation, and the close of human history, it is impossible to say; but we may safely conclude, that the uppermost thought in their mind was the announcement which the Lord had just made, 'Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down.' They must have gathered from the Saviour's language that this catastrophe was imminent ; and their anxiety was to know the time and the tokens of its arrival. St. Mark and St. Luke make the question of the disciples refer to one event and *one* time- 'When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled ? ' It is not only presumable, therefore, but indubitable, that the questions of the disciples only refer to *different aspects of the same great event*. This harmonises the statements of St. Matthew with those of the other Evangelists, and is plainly required by the circumstances of the case.

4. The interpretation which we are discussing rests also upon an erroneous and misleading conception of the phrase, 'end of the world' (age). It is not surprising that mere English readers of the New Testament should suppose that this phrase really means the destruction of the material earth; but such an error ought not to receive countenance from men of learning. We have already had occasion to remark that the true signification of (aion) is not world, but age ; that, like its Latin equivalent *aevum*, it refers to a period of time : thus, 'the end of the age ' means the close of the epoch or Jewish age or dispensation which was drawing nigh, as our Lord frequently intimated. All those passages which speak of 'the end' 'the end of the age,' or, 'the ends of the ages', refer to the same consummation, and always as nigh at hand. In I Cor. x. 11, St. Paul says The ends of the ages have stretched out to us implying, that he regarded himself and his readers as living near the conclusion of an aeon, or age.

So, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find the remarkable expression : 'Now, once, close upon the end of the ages' (erroneously rendered, The end of the world), 'hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself

‘ (Heb. ix. 26); clearly showing that the writer regarded the incarnation of Christ as taking place near the end of the aeon, or dispensational period. To suppose that he meant that it was close upon the end of the world, or the destruction of the material globe, would be to make him write false history as well as bad grammar. It would not be true in fact; for the world has already lasted longer since the incarnation than the whole duration of the Mosaic economy, from the exodus to the destruction of the temple. It is futile, therefore, to say that the ‘end of the age’ may mean a lengthened period, extending from the incarnation to our own times, and even far beyond them. That would be an aeon, and not the close of an men. The aeon, of which our Lord was speaking was about to close in a great catastrophe; and a catastrophe is not a protracted process, but a definitive and culminating act. We are compelled, therefore, to conclude that the ‘end of the age,’ or refers solely to the approaching termination of the Jewish age or dispensation.

5. It may indeed be objected, that even admitting the apostles to have been occupied exclusively with the fate of the temple and the events of their own time, there is no reason why the Lord should not overpass the limits of their vision, and extend a prophetic glance into the ages of a distant futurity. No doubt it was competent for Him to do so; but in that case we should expect to find some hint or intimation of the fact; some well-defined line between the immediate future and the indefinitely remote. If the Saviour passes from Jerusalem and its day of doom to the world and its judgment day, it would be only reasonable to look for some phrase such as, ‘After many days,’ or, ‘ It shall come to pass after these things,’ to mark the transition. But we search in vain for any such indication. The attempts of expositors to draw transition lines in this prophecy, showing where it ceases to speak of Jerusalem and Israel and passes to remote events and unborn generations, are wholly unsatisfactory. Nothing can be more arbitrary than the divisions attempted to be set up; they will not bear a moment’s examination, and are incompatible with the express statements of the prophecy itself. Will it be believed that some expositors find a mark of transition at Matt. xxiv. 29, where our Lord’s own words make the very idea totally inadmissible by His own note of time ‘Immediately’! *If*, in the face of such authority, so rash a suggestion can be proposed, what may not be expected in less strongly marked cases? But, in fact, all attempts to set up imaginary divisions and transitions in the prophecy signally fail. Let any fair and candid reader judge of the scheme of Dr. Lange, who may be taken as a representative of the school of double-sense expositors, in his distribution of this discourse of our Lord, and say whether it is possible to discern any trace of a natural division where he draws lines of transition. His first section, from ver. 4 to ver. 14, he

'Signs, and the manifestation of the end of the world in general

What! is it conceivable that our Lord, when about to reply to the eager and palpitating hearts, filled with anxiety about the calamities which He told them were impending, should commence by speaking of the 'end of the world in general'? They were thinking of the temple and the immediate future : would He speak of the world and the indefinitely remote? But is there anything in this first section inapplicable to the disciples themselves and their time? Is there anything which did not actually happen in their own day? 'Yes.' it will be said ; ' the gospel of the kingdom has not yet been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.' But we have this very fact vouched for by St. Paul (Col. i. 5, 6)-'The word of the truth of the gospel, which is come. unto you, as *it is in all the* world,' etc.; and, again (Col. i. 23)-' The gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven.' There was, then, in the acre of the apostles, such a world- wide diffusion of the gospel as to satisfy the Saviour's predictions - 'The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the word' (oikemene) .

But the decisive objection to this scheme is, that the whole passage is evidently addressed to the *disciples*, and speaks of what *they* shall see, *they* shall do, *they* shall suffer ; the whole falls within their own observation and experience, and cannot be spoken of or to an invisible audience in a far distant era of futurity, which even yet has not appeared upon the earth. Lange's next division, comprising from ver. 15 to ver. 22, is entitled,

*Signs of the end of the world in particular:**(a) The Destruction of Jerusalem.*

Without stopping to inquire into the relation of these ideas, it is satisfactory to find Jerusalem at last introduced. But how unnatural the transition from the 'end of the world' back to the invasion of Judea and the siege of Jerusalem ! Could such a sudden and immense leap have possibly been made by the disciples ? Could it have been intelligible to them, or is it intelligible now ? But mark the point of transition, as fixed by Lange, at ver. 15: 'When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation,' etc. This, surely, is not *transition*, but *continuity*: all that precedes leads up to this point; the wars, and famines, and pestilences, and persecutions, and martyrdoms, were all preparatory and introductory to the '*end*;' *that* is, to the final catastrophe which was to overtake the city, and temple, and nation

of Israel.

Next follows a paragraph from ver. 23 to ver. 28, which Lange calls,

(b) Interval of partial and suppressed judgment.'

This title is itself an example of fanciful and arbitrary exposition. There is something incongruous and self-contradictory in the very words themselves. A day of judgment implies publicity and manifestation, not silence and suppression. But what can be the meaning of 'silent and suppressed days of judgment,' which go on from the destruction of Jerusalem to the end of the world? If it be meant that there is a sense in which God is always judging the world, that is a truism which might be affirmed of any period, before as well as after the destruction of Jerusalem. But the most objectionable part of this exposition is the violent treatment of the word 'then' (p. 62) [tote] (ver. 23). Lange says: 'Then (i.e., in the time intervening between the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world).' Surely, a prodigious *then ! It* is no longer a point of time, but an aeon - a vast and indefinite period; and during all that time the statements in the paragraph, ver. 23 to ver. 28, are supposed to be in course of fulfilment. But when we turn to the prophecy itself we find no change of subject, no break in the continuity of the discourse, no hint of any transition from one epoch to another. The note of time, '*then*' [tote], is decisive against any hiatus or transition. Our Saviour is putting the disciples on their guard against the deceivers and impostors who infested the last days of the Jewish commonwealth; and says to them, '*Then*' (i.e., at that time, in the agony of the Jewish war) 'if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not,' etc. It is Jerusalem, always Jerusalem, and only Jerusalem, of which our Lord here speaks. At length we come to -

The Actual End of the World'

(ver. 24-31).

Having made the transition from the 'end of the world backwards to the destruction of Jerusalem, the process is now reversed, and there is another transition, from the destruction of Jerusalem to the 'actual end of the world.' This actual end is placed after the appearance of those false Christs and false prophets against whom the disciples were warned. This allusion to 'false Christs' ought to have saved the critic from the mistake into which he has fallen, and to have distinctly indicated the period to which the prediction refers. But where is there any sign of a division or transition here? There is no trace or token of any: on the contrary, the express language of our Lord excludes the idea of any interval at all; for He says: 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days,' etc. This note of time is decisive, and peremptorily

forbids the supposition of any break or hiatus in the continuity of His discourse.

But we have gone far enough in the demonstration of the arbitrary and uncritical treatment which this prophecy has received, and have been betrayed into premature exegesis of some portion of its contents. What we contend for, is the *unity and continuity of the whole discourse*. From the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew to the close of the twenty-fifth, it *is one and indivisible*. The theme is the approaching consummation of the age, with its attendant and concomitant events ; the woes which were to overtake that 'wicked generation,' comprehending the invasion of the Roman armies, the siege and capture of Jerusalem, the total destruction of the temple, the frightful calamities of the people. Along with this we find the true Parousia, or the coming of the Son of man, the judicial infliction of divine wrath upon the impenitent, and the deliverance and recompense of the faithful. From beginning to end, these two chapters form one continuous, consecutive, and homogeneous discourse. So it must have been regarded by the disciples, to whom it 'was addressed; and so, in the absence of any hint or indication to the contrary in the record, we feel bound to it.

6. In conclusion, we cannot help adverting to one other consideration, which we are persuaded has had much to do with the erroneous interpretation of this prophecy, viz., the inadequate appreciation of the importance and grandeur of the event which forms its burden- the consummation of the aeon age, and the abrogation of the Jewish dispensation.

That was an event which formed an epoch in the divine government of the world. The Mosaic economy, which had been ushered in with such pomp and grandeur amidst the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, and had existed for well nigh sixteen centuries, which had been the divinely instituted medium of communication between God and man, and which was intended to realise a kingdom of God upon earth,- had proved a comparative failure through the moral unfitness of the people of Israel, and was doomed to come to an end amid the most terrific demonstration of the justice and wrath of God. The temple of Jerusalem, for ages the glory and crown of Mount Zion,- the sacred shrine, in whose holy place Jehovah was pleased to dwell,- the holy and beautiful house, which was the palladium of the nation's safety, and dearer than life to every son of Abraham,- was about to be desecrated and destroyed, so that not one stone should be left upon another. The chosen people, the children of the Friend of God, the favoured *nation, with* whom the God of the whole earth deigned to enter into *covenant and* to be called their King, - were to be overwhelmed by the most terrible calamities that ever befell a nation; were to be expatriated, deprived of their nationality,

excluded from their *ancient and* peculiar relation to God, and driven forth as wanderers on the face of the earth, a byword and hissing among all nations. But along with all this there were to be changes for the better. First, and chiefly, the close of the won would be the inauguration of the reign of God. There were to be honour and glory for the true and faithful servants of God, who would then enter into the full possession of the heavenly inheritance. (This will be more fully unfolded in the sequel of our investigation.) But there was also to be a glorious change in this world. The old made way for the new ; the Law was replaced by the Gospel; Moses was superseded by Christ. The narrow and exclusive system, which embraced only a single people, was succeeded by a new and better covenant, which embraced the whole family of man, and knew no difference between Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised. The dispensation of symbols and ceremonies, suited to the childhood of humanity, was merged in an order of things in which religion became a spiritual service, every place a temple, every worshipper a priest, and God the universal Father. This was a revolution greater far than any that had ever occurred in the history of mankind. It made a new world ; it was the 'world to come,' the [οικονογη μελλουσα] of Hebrews ii. 5; and the magnitude and importance of the change it is impossible to over- estimate. It is this that gives such significance to the overthrow of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem: these are the outward and visible signs of the abrogation of the old order and the introduction of the new. The story of the siege and capture of the Holy City is not simply a thrilling historical episode, such as the siege of Troy or the fall of Carthage ; it is not merely the closing scene in the annals of an ancient nation;- it has a supernatural and divine significance; it has a relation to God and the human race, and marks one of the most memorable epochs of time. This is the reason why the event is spoken of in the Scripture in terms which to some appear overstrained, or to require some greater catastrophe to account for them. But if it was fitting that the introduction of that economy should be signalled by portents and wonders, earthquakes, lightnings, thunders, and trumpet-blasts, -it was no less fitting that it should go out amid similar phenomena, fearful sights and great signs from heaven.' Had the true significance and grandeur of the event been better apprehended by expositors, they would not have found the language in which it is depicted by our Lord extravagant or overstrained.²⁹

29 The termination of the Jewish aion in the first century, and of the Roman in the fifth and sixth, were each marked by the same concurrence of calamities, wars, tumults, pestilences, earthquakes, &c., all marking the time of one of God's peculiar seasons of visitation.' 'For the same belief in the connexion of physical with moral convulsion-, see Niebuhr, *Leben's Nachrichten*, ii. p. 672 Dr. Arnold :

We are now prepared to enter upon the more particular examination of the contents of this prophetic discourse ; which we shall endeavour to do as concisely as possible.