

## The Significance of Matthew 24 Today—Part 2

A few Sabbaths ago we began a study in Matthew chapter 24 dealing with last day events and we covered the first 20 verses. You remember also that I read several statements from the Spirit of Prophecy that indicate clearly that the words Jesus spoke in this chapter (**Matthew 24**) has a direct application to us in these last days, more than it did for those He spoke them to 2000 years ago.

In verses 1-14 Jesus warned us about false Christs; false prophets; wars and rumors of wars. He warned about natural disasters; about martyrdoms; about extreme hatred and people's love growing cold; about the destruction of Jerusalem, which was our main focus; and finally the end of all things coming after the gospel has been preached in all the world.

Then in verses 15-20 Jesus backs up in His narrative a bit and gives more detailed instructions to all Christians as to how they can escape the doomed city of Jerusalem when the armies of Rome would come in and plant their banner in the holy ground, which of course was no longer holy because Jesus had walked out of the Temple for the last time, and the glory of God departed and it was replaced by "*the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel,*" He says.

"Abomination" being something extremely disgusting and offensive to God. And "desolation" meaning "forsaken of God's presence."

And you know the rest of the story, how the Roman army under General Cestius came in parading their idolatrous standards and surrounded Jerusalem (**Luke 21:20, 21**). And when everything seemed favorable for an immediate attack and a quick victory, all of a sudden the general withdrew his forces with no apparent reason.

Then as Rome was retreating from Jerusalem, the Jews became a bit courageous and chased after them. And while the two armies were fully engaged in battle, the Christians, heeding the words of Christ 36½ years earlier (which would make it around A .D. 66) fled to the mountains.

Then 3½ years later in A. D. 70, Rome came back (under Titus this time), and the Temple and the city were completely destroyed fulfilling Jesus' words that were spoken years before, literally.

Rather than continuing on, this morning I'd like to go a little more in depth in verses 15-20, because I think it's well worthwhile to look at a few more details that we just skimmed over last time.

At this point, let me give you a few interesting facts about the Christians that fled from Jerusalem prior to the destruction by Rome. Several early Christian historians from the third and fourth centuries agree that when the Christians fled (after that sign that was given by Jesus), most of them found refuge in the small city of Pella, which was in the land of Perea just beyond the Jordan River. You can read that in *The Great Controversy*, **page 31**.

Now, does the name "Qumran" ring a bell with anyone? Qumran lies due east of Jerusalem at the northern tip of the Dead Sea.

So, if the Christians went due east from Jerusalem, crossed over the Jordan, before they went north to Pella, they would have gone right by the place where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in 1948. That means that some of the Christians that fled Jerusalem could very well have been the ones who secreted those scriptures, those scrolls, in the caves there. We don't know that for sure, but it's very plausible that they did.

Anyway, I'm thankful that they, or whoever, did it; aren't you? Because when those scrolls were discovered, they verified the accuracy and the authenticity of the Bible that we have today. And so we can be sure that we have the Word of God, without question. That should mean a great deal to us.

Another bit of interesting information I gleaned as I researched this subject was that evidently all the Christians did not flee from Jerusalem at the same time. Is that the picture that you've had in your mind, when Jesus said, When you see the sign, it's time to go? You can see them all flooding out at the same time? I don't think that's the way it happened.

Even though Jesus gave specific instructions to leave immediately when the sign was given, there are reports from early historians that some Christians were still in Jerusalem as late as the early summer of A. D. 69. That was less than a year before that second and last siege began in the spring of A. D. 70. If this is true, then it is evidence that some Christians at least were slow to heed Christ's warning, which also means that the Christians back then were probably not much different than the Christians today, unfortunately, because some today also are slow to move when God says move.

The Jewish historian Josephus says that the migration of the Christians from Jerusalem was gradual, beginning A. D. 64. Now pay attention. I know some of these facts may be a little dry or hard to understand, but there's a reason why I'm giving you these facts, we'll see that in just a little bit. But the withdrawal was gradual starting in A. D. 64. That means that some of the Christians had the foresight to begin leaving a couple years before the idolatrous standards of the Romans was placed in the holy ground. (You can read that in **Matthew 24:15** where it talks about that.) They must have anticipated, earlier than some, that Rome was about to make her move. Perhaps they heard some chatter about this before the sign that Jesus foretold actually came to pass.

Then when that sign was finally given in A. D. 66, there was a mass exodus of Christians from Jerusalem. And then over the next couple years, Christians kept trickling out of Jerusalem until there were no Christians left. It could be that some of them hesitated because it was hard for them to believe that God had really forsaken the Jewish church and the Temple. After all, they still observed a religious form, didn't they? People still brought sacrifices to the Temple. They sacrificed evening and morning worship and all the rest. They kept the feast days and all the other ceremonial things that the Old Testament people did. And so perhaps it was a little difficult for some to say, Maybe God is still here.

Maybe some of them stayed a little longer in order to try to convince family and friends of the coming doom. We don't know all the details. But this we do know: once all who were going to come out had come out, then God used Rome to besiege the city (which lasted about six months)

and ended in mass casualties and the complete destruction of the Temple that was originally built for God's own worship.

I say God used Rome, because remember, God is the one who is in control—He's the one who is in charge. Daniel 2:21 says He's the one who takes down kings, He's the one to set them up.

Many times in the history of Israel, God used heathen nations to punish His rebellious people. That's why so many of them were killed and many others taken captive by such heathen nations as Egypt, Babylon, and Rome. And finally, after many, many attempts to bring His people back into harmony with Himself and with His law—even by sending His own Son—God had to finally give up on the Jewish church completely. And to this day they are scattered throughout the world “that they might be looked upon as especially visited by a curse from God.” (EW 213)

Their prayer was slightly delayed, but it was finally answered that day when “*all the people said, His blood be upon us and our children.*”

Now, why have I shared all these historical events about Israel with you this morning? It's because in **1 Corinthians 10:11** it says, “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*”

I have several translations in my study that I like to compare with the King James Bible from time to time because, those of you who study know that every once in a while you come across some things that are really difficult to understand. I get some better understanding as I read from different translations sometimes. And I get fresh ideas, because it uses different words but says the same thing for the most part.

I have the Living Bible, it's a paraphrase and most of the time it's pretty good. There are some problems with it, but in this case I thought I would read it to you—**1 Corinthians 10:11**—from the Living Bible because I think it helps us a little bit better to understand what Paul says.

*“All these things happened to them as examples – as object lessons to us – to warn us against doing the same things; they were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end.”*

Also, Paul said in **Romans 15:4** “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime (or in the Old Testament), were written for (what?) our learning.*” And so, Ellen White is not the only one who warns us against repeating the history of rebellious Israel, is she? The Bible does the same.

One of the main reasons God's Word has been handed down to us with such sacrifice on the part of so many is that we might have a heads-up, that Satan will be highly successful in bringing down God's last day church the same way he destroyed the Jewish church.

Now let's notice a few parallels between then and now. Those of you who are familiar with the independent movement know that during the mid to late '80s a few people, like the Christians who left Jerusalem, had the foresight to realize that Rome, or Catholicism, or “*the abomination of desolation,*” had for some time been making inroads into the SDA denomination. Then in the

early to mid '90s there was a mass exodus of Christians from the church, because it had become quite obvious to them that the camel didn't just have his nose in the tent anymore, but all four feet as well.

And since that time there have been a few that keep trickling out, because they see the impending doom foretold in the parallel experience of the Jews. And unfortunately there are some that keep going back. And I have to wonder whether or not some of those Christians that fled Jerusalem so long ago, got tired of the inconvenience of living in the mountains as those 3½ years went slowly by. Perhaps there were some who began to doubt that maybe Jesus was mistaken; maybe He really didn't mean what He said. I'd like to know, but I haven't been able to find any information about whether some of those Christians went back or not. But I wouldn't be surprised if there were some who did because human nature then isn't any different than it is now and we see the same thing taking place.

Now, here's the \$64,000 question: Who were the ones holding things up 2,000 years ago, and who are the ones holding things up today? We see a parallel experience here. The Spirit of Prophecy is very clear that we are repeating the history of the Jews.

And so who were holding things up back then, from God's judgments falling upon Jerusalem? It was those who did not flee immediately when the sign was first given. Those who did and are today dragging their feet for various reasons.

Let me read you something. This quote here is from *Bible Commentary, Vol. 7 pg. 976*. These are Ellen White's words. She says, "The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it [**the image of the beast. And what is the image of the beast? Apostate Protestantism in this country who uses the civil authority to enforce its law. (2SM 380)**]

And so she said, "The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it [**the image of the beast**] is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided."

Let me read you another quote. *Great Controversy, page 443, 444*. "It was apostasy that led the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and this prepared the way for the development of the papacy—the beast. . . . So apostasy in the church will prepare the way for the image to the beast."

As we search the Spirit of Prophecy we will find that there is more than one test for the people of God in these last days. But the great test for us is whether or not we stay connected to the image of the beast or Apostate Protestantism—that's the test. If we fail that test we will also fail the next test which will be actually receiving the mark of the beast when we accept Sunday instead of the Sabbath.

If you are in an apostate protestant church you are connected to the image of the beast. I'm talking about not only the conference church, but all churches. Aren't we told in **Revelation 18:1-5** that there is a call—the fourth angel's message that needs to be given—and it's to be given

to all churches. I can't remember the reference, it's in Vol. 7, nine-something [7BC 985] where Ellen White equates all nations with all churches. In other words when it says that for all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, her false doctrines and such, that means that all churches have done that. And all the churches that have done that, they have to have a call-out message. And that call-out message is not going to come from within the denomination, or any denomination. It has to come from outside, from people like us. But let's just leave that for now.

Go to **Genesis 19** because we're going to see a principle that's biblical and it's very important and it has to do with what we've been talking about here. **Genesis 19 beginning with verse 17.** This is talking about the destruction of Sodom. *"And it came to pass, when they [that is, the angels that led Lot and his wife and his two daughters out of Sodom before it was destroyed] had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:"* Now Lot was a little slow to move when God said move, right? Nothing new.

**Verse 20:** *"Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar."* And Zoar means "little". Even though Zoar was a little place it was just as corrupt as Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact it was God's original plan to destroy that city along with the others, and He did so a little bit later. And Lot had to flee from Zoar up into the mountains where he should have been in the first place.

Notice carefully **verse 22.** *"Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar."* The angel said, "Hurry up, Lot, get out of here, because I can't do anything as long as you stay here. I can do nothing until you are well on your way to Zoar. I cannot carry out God's instruction to destroy the city until you are at a safe distance."

Do you see the love and long-suffering of God here? *"Not willing that any should perish"*? He's not going to destroy the righteous with the wicked until a certain boundary line, which God Himself has set, has been crossed. Then once that line has been crossed, the righteous who won't listen, or refuse to move out when God says to move out – like Lot's wife – are no longer righteous, but they are counted with the wicked.

Over and over again in Scripture we see this principle played out.

- During the days of Noah, God didn't destroy the earth with water until all who were going to get into the Ark were safe inside.
- Same with Rahab and her family when the walls of Jericho fell down.

- Same with the apostasy of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The earth didn't split apart and swallow up those men until all who wanted to, were separate from the tents of those wicked men.
- Same with Israel when fleeing Egypt. The waters of the Red Sea did not come crashing down until all who chose to were safe on the other side.

Also in **Genesis 18** God told Abraham that He would not destroy the righteous with the wicked even if there were only ten people in those two wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, unbeknownst to them—the wicked, then and now,—all the blessing that they enjoy in this life can be attributed to the few, and I emphasize **few**, righteous people who are still in the world and in the church.

*The Desire of Ages, page 306.* “Hearts that respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit are the channels through which God's blessing flows. Were those who serve God removed from the earth, and His Spirit withdrawn from among men [**which is going to happen one of these days, soon**], this world would be left to desolation and destruction, the fruit of Satan's dominion. Though the wicked know it not, they owe even the blessings of this life to the presence, in the world, of God's people whom they despise and oppress.”

And I want to tell you something; independent ministries and independent churches are being despised and persecuted and oppressed and ridiculed today by the majority of Seventh-day Adventists. That alone ought to tell you something!

Here's another quote: *The Great Controversy, page 631, 632.* “In the form of men, angels are often in the assemblies of the righteous; and they visit the assemblies of the wicked, as they went to Sodom, to make a record of their deeds, to determine whether they have passed the boundary of God's forbearance. The Lord delights in mercy; and for the sake of a **few** who really serve Him, He restrains calamities and prolongs the tranquillity of multitudes. Little do sinners against God realize that they are indebted for their own lives to the faithful few whom they delight to ridicule and oppress.”

This is also a principle that comes right from God's word. **Genesis 39:1-5.** “*And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.*” And so this is a biblical principle that God blesses the wicked because of the few righteous who are within their midst.

Go also to **Numbers 25:11.** This is a story about Phinehas, not to be confused with Hophni and Phinehas, this was a different one. This was a good man. There was a time when one of the men of Israel brought a heathen woman into the camp and into his tent and Phinehas went in a pinned

them both to the ground with a javelin. Look what it says in **verse 11**. “*Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.*” And so even within God’s church, it is the few righteous ones who either stay or delay God’s judgments.

So, how much longer will God – I don’t like the words “put up with”, there’s probably a better expression – but how long will God endure an apostate church before it is metaphorically burned to the ground as was the Temple in Jerusalem? There is an answer to this question. Here it is: Until all who are going to come out have come out, understanding that God has set the boundary even for the righteous who continue to drag their feet.

When God’s patience has finally been exhausted destruction will come suddenly and swiftly. And all who are still without the borders of the doomed city (i.e. the apostate church) will be eternally lost. That’s a hard one to swallow, but it’s true.

All through history this has been the case. I was on the internet the other day and I found a poem that I thought was interesting. It was by a man by the name of Thomas Cox. He lived in the 1800s, and he said:

“There is a time, we know not when,  
A point, we know not where  
That marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.

There is a line, by us unseen,  
That crosses every path;  
The hidden boundary between  
God’s patience and His wrath.”

And we don’t know where that point is for ourselves or for any body of believers, but there is a line and God knows where it is. And when He deems best, things are going to begin to happen. And I already know that some, when they hear this and the previous message, will be upset with me, but I’ll tell you, I’d rather have them upset at me now than later, if you know what I mean. I don’t want anyone to be able to point their finger at me someday in the future and say, “You knew all these things, why didn’t you tell me?” I don’t want that to happen.

And friends, I want to be free from all sin and I want to be free from the blood of all men when my name comes up in review before God; don’t you? It means everything to us to be found “*without spot or wrinkle or any such thing*” in our characters. And to be found that way is to be found “in Christ”. And to be found “in Christ” means to be separate from personal sin and corporate sin.

In a nutshell, as we’ve studied in the past, that is the Loud Cry message of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> angels’ messages combined. That is the last message that this world is ever going to hear and it is the message that we are to give. You can read that in *Early Writings, 277*.

We have seen when, and why, and how, and what happened 2000 years ago to God's professed Seventh-day Adventist church. They didn't go by that name, but that's what they were. They were seventh-day Sabbath keepers and they were looking for the advent of the Messiah. We are told very plainly in *Testimonies, vol. 8, page 67*, I believe I read that last time, that the destruction of Jerusalem is a representation of what is going to happen, and even now is in the process of fulfillment, to God's professed church in these last days.

**Matthew 24:21:** *“For then [following the destruction of Jerusalem] shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time [or until now, when Jesus was speaking this], no, nor ever shall be.”* So never again will there be a time of trouble like this great tribulation we're talking about right now.

So what's the difference between the great time of trouble that's already passed and the time of trouble that we're going to have to go through yet in the future? What is it about this great tribulation that we won't have to go through again? What I understand that to mean is that this great time of trouble lasted a long time. The future time of trouble is going to be a very short period of time. We'll read a little bit further here, but it talks about those days being shortened. If they weren't shortened, no flesh would be saved. Same thing in the future. Ellen White says unless the time of trouble that's coming will be very short, no flesh would be saved. Satan would make sure everybody on the planet was dead. So that's the difference. That's why it calls it a great time of trouble because of the length of it.

**Verse 22:** *“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake [for those who Jesus very carefully chose, that's what elect means] those days shall be shortened.”*

In these verses Jesus foretells the experience of His true followers through what has become known as the Dark Ages – dark because God's word was withheld from the people. I looked up a few verses that talk about God's Word bringing light. Does anything come to your mind when you think of God's Word being light?

*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105.*

**Psalm 119:130** *“The entrance of thy words giveth light; . . .”*

**Isaiah 8:20** *“To the law and to the testimony: [to the law of 10 commandments, and to the testimony of all the prophets in the Bible] if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”*

**2 Peter 1:19** *“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, . . .”*

Because of the papacy, for 1260 years, between 538 and 1798, this world was a very dark place. But the darkness began long before 538. When Jesus came to this world it was a dark place, and while He was here the light of God's truth shone through everyone, but gradually, because men loved darkness better than light as it says in **John 3:19**, it continued to grow darker and darker.



And if God had not raised up the Protestant Reformation to shorten that “great tribulation” (GC 267), Satan would have snuffed out all life on this planet if he would have been allowed to. That’s why verse 22 says if it wasn’t shortened no flesh would have been saved. But for the sake of a few righteous ones God blessed even the wicked by bringing persecution to an end before 1798.

**Matthew 24:23-28** *“Then [after the tribulation] if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”*

In other words, when you see vultures circling above, you know something is dead or dying. Jesus said, When you see the eagles gather together, as a sign that the end is near for some poor creature, so when you see the signs that He foretells in this chapter, you should know that the end of the world is near.

Now, let’s back up and consider again what Jesus said in the verses we just read. Earlier in this chapter the first thing Jesus warned His disciples about were to be aware of false Christs and false prophets. Now here again, after the dark ages come to an end—sometime after 1798—He warns of the same thing.

As soon as the Word of God was given back to the people, through the Reformation, and they had freedom of worship and of religious expression, Satan had his agents already in place to misinterpret the Bible and lead people into all kinds of errors and fanaticism.

And according to **verse 24**, what were these false Christs and false prophets going to do? *“Show great signs and wonders”* and deceive all but the elect. Signs, and wonders, and secret chambers, have to do with spiritualism. The words *“signs and wonders”* are connected to the supernatural, false miracles, and psychic phenomena. And “secret chambers” has to do with séances, and fortune telling, and communication with the dead.

Do you remember reading about the rise of modern spiritualism in *Early Writings*, there’s a chapter in there that talks about the rise of modern spiritualism. It’s titled “Mysterious Rapping.”

Not long after the great tribulation ended in 1798, the Bible says that Satan would use spiritualism to try to deceive God’s elect – that’s what we just read. 1848 marks the beginning of modern spiritualism in Hydesville, New York, when the Fox sisters, Margaret and Catherine, worked out a knocking code to communicate with evil spirits. And since that time spiritualism has grown to many millions of adherents. The latest statistic says about 12 million spiritualists in this world.

But the truth be known, nearly all professed Christians, and of every other type of religion, no matter what they are, are involved in some sort of spiritualism and they don’t even realize it.

Because spiritualism has its roots in the Garden of Eden along with pantheism. And it's interesting that through these two errors Satan has used to gain a foothold in Christianity as a whole and even within Adventism today.

Turn with me to **Genesis 3:4, 5**. *“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:”* That is the first half of Satan's deception in the Garden. The second half is in **verse 5**: *“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”*

So not only does spiritualism claim communication with the dead, but it also supports the idea that one can disobey God and go on living forever. Isn't that what the serpent promised Eve? You can sin, you can disobey what God said, and *“ye shall not surely die.”* This is what nearly the whole world that believes in a supreme being believes today, including, unfortunately, many, many Seventh-day Adventists.

Pantheism essentially teaches the same thing. Pantheism teaches that God is in everything, including the sinner. And everybody knows that if God dwells in you, then you have eternal life. That's even the testimony of Scripture. So you see how tricky the devil is?

Let's look again at Matthew 24:26. I want you to pick out the most important words of warning in verse 26 – **Matthew 24:26**. Read that to yourself and tell me what the most important words in that verse are—

*“Go no forth”* and *“Believe it not”* is the most important part of that verse. Don't even be curious to hear what these spiritualist teachers have to say. It is to place yourself on Satan's enchanted ground to even go listen to them. We already know what happened to Eve when she tried that. Certainly we are no smarter than Eve was. In fact, we're more degenerate now six thousand years down the road than she was. So if the devil could deceive her so easily, what do you suppose he could do to us?

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, a person doesn't actually have to claim to be Christ in order to fulfill this prophecy where it says, *“Lo, here is Christ, or there.”* All they have to do is claim to have the truth when they don't.

Let me give you a couple examples. In *Testimonies to Ministers* there are over 30 pages dealing with a man named Stanton who claimed to have a message from God, but it says “he ran before he was sent.” In other words, his message was premature, therefore it was a false message. And on **page 33** it calls his message one of the “Lo here's” and “Lo there's.” That's the same language that **Matthew 24:23** uses of those claiming to be Christ, or claiming to have a true message that will lead you to Christ when it will actually lead you away from Christ. And so a false Christ or a false prophet is someone who teaches a way of salvation that divine inspiration does not teach.

Also in **7 Bible Commentary, page 985**, speaking of the time just before probation closes, says this, “minds will be confused by many voices crying, ‘Lo, here is Christ; lo, He is there. This is

the truth, I have the message from God, He has sent me with great light.” Do we hear those voices today? They are all over the place. We hear that even in Adventist circles.

It's true today that there are many minds that are confused by many voices, when what they need to be doing is listening to God's voice through His written word, and also listening to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit as He opens our understanding as to what is in this Book.

Don't you just love **verse 27**? *“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* That is our blessed hope. There is nothing mysterious or secret about the return of Jesus. No one will have to be told that it is He who is coming in the clouds of heaven when He comes. The Bible says every eye is going to see Him. And yet the personation of Christ, that overwhelming surprise that's going to take the world, will captivate everyone except a very small remnant—God's elect—before the actual event of Jesus' coming takes place. To me, that's amazing, when you consider that that subject is so clear in the Bible. How could anybody get confused. That's just proof that people are listening to people rather than studying for themselves.

**Matthew 24:29**, *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days [those days that were shortened] shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,”*

Do you remember when the sun was darkened and the moon didn't give its light? May 19, 1780. That was eighteen years before 1798. In other words, when Jesus said these days are going to be shortened, and here's the signs that that's going to happen. Eighteen years before that prophecy was to come to an end, before the Dark Ages would finally be completely ended, He said there's going to be certain signs that are going to take place, the sun's going to be dark, the moon's not going to give her light. That's happened, of course.

Then it says, *“and the stars shall fall from heaven, [when did that happen? Nov. 13, 1833] and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”* When did that take place? It hasn't happened yet.

In *Early Writings, page 41*, it says, “December 16, 1848, the Lord gave me a view of the shaking of the powers of the heavens. I saw that when the Lord said ‘heaven,’ in giving the signs recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, He meant heaven, and when He said ‘earth’ He meant earth. The powers of heaven are the sun, moon, and stars. They rule in the heavens. The powers of earth are those that rule on the earth. The powers of heaven **will be** shaken at the voice of God. Then the sun, moon, and stars will be moved out of their places. They will not pass away, but be shaken by the voice of God.”

When does God do this? It's going to happen before He comes.

Go with me to Revelation 16, it actually happens at the beginning of the seventh plague. **Revelation 16:17, 18**: *“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake [not the Lisbon earthquake, that's past], such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”*

*Early Writings, page 285*, commenting on these verses: “It was at midnight that God chose to deliver His people. As the wicked were mocking around them, suddenly the sun appeared, shining in his strength, and the moon stood still. The wicked looked upon the scene with amazement, while the saints beheld with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance. Signs and wonders followed in quick succession. Everything seemed turned out of its natural course. The streams ceased to flow. Dark, heavy clouds came up and clashed against each other. But there was one clear place of settled glory [**Orion**], whence came the voice of God like many waters, shaking the heavens and the earth. There was a mighty earthquake. The graves were opened, and those who had died in faith under the third angel's message [**this is talking about a special resurrection, not the general resurrection of the righteous**], keeping the Sabbath, came forth from their dusty beds, glorified, to hear the covenant of peace that God was to make with those who had kept His law.” Some of our own loved ones who have died recently keeping, in faith, the Sabbath and believing the third angel's message, are going to come up in a special resurrection.

And then look what it says in **Matthew 24:30**: “*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.*”

And what is the sign of the Son of Man in heaven? A little black cloud that comes out of the east about half the size of a man's hand. I've always wondered whether or not there's a connection to what Ellen White says about that sign and what it says in 1 Kings 18:44. You'll remember the story, Elijah was on Mount Carmel after all the wicked prophets had been slain, the three and a half years of drought were just about to come to an end, and Elijah began to pray for rain. He prayed, and he prayed. He sent his servant out to look to see if he could see a rain cloud and the servant came back, “No, nothing yet.” Things were just as dry and parched as they had been for three years. And so Elijah prayed again and he sent his servant and the servant came back, “nothing yet.” And he did that again and again, seven times. Finally the seventh time he prayed and he said, “Go see.” The servant went and sure enough, he came running back and said, “I see a little cloud coming out of the sea, like a man's hand.” It doesn't say half a man's hand, but **like** a man's hand. It's very similar.

I don't know if there's any connection, but I can tell you one thing, there is a connection in this point and that is, it was by faith that Elijah was enabled to experience the blessing of that rain that came; it was through faith. And it is going to be through faith that we're going to see the sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, that little sign, that little black cloud that's so small in the distance. As it gets closer it gets more bright and lighter and larger as it comes and we're going to know that that's Jesus coming.

The verse continues to say, “*and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,*”

Why are they going to mourn? Because they see Jesus coming and they know they're lost—eternally lost. There are going to be a lot of people mourning.

“*and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds [**from every direction**], from one end of heaven to the other.*”

Have you ever given any thought that the very first person to greet you is going to be your guardian angel? It's in *Education, page 305*. It says, "The angel who was his guardian [**David**] from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps, and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning. . . ." So if it's going to be first to greet David, it's going to be the first to greet us, too. Isn't that something?

I'm going to stop right there, because there's a chapter break and we'll start with verse 32 next time, but let me just say this in closing. There is yet another application or another fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem for these last days beside the one I gave you earlier in *8T 67*, where it says that Jerusalem is a representation of what is going to happen to the church in apostasy.

Here's the other application. It's *The Great Controversy, pages 36, 37*. "The Saviour's prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow. In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the doom of a world that has rejected God's mercy and trampled upon His law [**especially the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment**]. . . . But in that day, as in the time of Jerusalem's destruction, God's people will be delivered, everyone that shall be found written among the living."

Our names are registered in the Lamb's Book of Life up in heaven when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Master. And when our name comes up in review before God, they will be retained there only because we have learned to abide in Christ continually. This is what all of us must learn and experience while there is still just a little bit of time left, while the four angels are still holding the four winds of God's long-delayed judgments, until God's people are sealed in their foreheads.

And I have to ask you the question: Do you want to be one of those people who are sealed in their foreheads. Jesus said, "*Take heed that no man deceive you.*"