

Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24 Exposed as Folly by John Gill



John Gill (23 November 1697 – 14 October 1771) was an English Baptist pastor, biblical scholar, and theologian. Born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, he attended Kettering Grammar School where he mastered the Latin classics and learned Greek by age 11. He continued self-study in everything from logic to Hebrew, his love for the latter remaining throughout his life. (Quoted from Wikipedia.) John Gill was also the first Baptist pastor to write a commentary on the entire Bible! His interpretation of the prophecies of the Books of Daniel and the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are in agreement with most of his contemporaries who held to the Historicist school of interpretation. Sad to say not very many Christians today know what John Gill and his fellows had to say. Their voices have been drowned out by John Nelson Darby's futurism. Why would Darby be promoted over John Gill? Undoubtedly it was because of the insidious work of the Jesuit Order! The Jesuit's plan is to bring the "separated brethren" back to the fold of the Pope. Will you follow them? I'm not. That's why I want to promote the true interpretation of Matthew 24 and the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD bought about by none other than the Messiah Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ!

I compiled this article from <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/matthew-24/> in order to make it easier to read John Gill's entire commentary of Matthew 24 without having to click 51 times. In my opinion, David Nikao Wilcoxson's articles on [Olivet Discourse Decoded](#) are the best 21st-century commentary on Matthew 24, and he himself quotes extensively from John Gill's 18th-century commentary. Why do Bible teachers today teach a futuristic interpretation of Matthew 24 when John Gill and other Protestant / Baptist writers clearly explained how it was all fulfilled in 70 A.D.? Answer: Jesuits promoted John Nelson Darby's false futurist interpretation of Matthew 24 in order to mislead 20th and 21st century Christians to accept the

heretical doctrine of Christian Zionism and to take their eyes off the Popes of Rome and the biblical Antichrist.

Matthew 24:1

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple

He not only went out of it for that time, but took his final leave of it, never to return more to it; having foretold its desolation, which he, in part, by so doing, immediately fulfilled: this the disciples observing, and being intent on the outward splendour, and worldly grandeur of it, were concerned that so beautiful a structure should be deserted; and almost thought it incredible, that so strong, and firm a building could be destroyed. ***And his disciples came unto him:***

as he went, and as soon as he was come out of the temple, and whilst in view of it: ***for to show him the buildings of the temple;***

the walls of it, and courts adjoining to it, how beautiful and firm they were: whether this was done by them to raise in him admiration or commiseration, in hopes he might change the sentence he had passed upon it, is not easy to say; or whether this did not express their incredulity about the desolation of it; which Christ's answer, in the next verse, seems to imply. Mark says, it was "one of the disciples" that observed these to him, who might be accompanied with the rest, and in their name address him; and who, probably, might be Peter, since he was generally their mouth; and that he should speak to him in this manner: "master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here!" Luke says, "how it was adorned with goodly stones, and gifts." The Jews give very great encomiums of the second temple, as repaired by Herod; and it was undoubtedly a very fine structure. They say ^{F16}, that he built the house of the sanctuary, "an exceeding beautiful building"; and that he repaired the temple, in beauty "greatly exceeding" that of Solomon's ^{F17}. They moreover observe ^{F18}, that

"he who has not seen the building of Herod, has never seen, (han Nyynb) , "a beautiful building." With what is it built? says Rabbah, with stones of green and white marble. And there are others say, that it was built with stones of spotted green and white marble."

These, very likely, were the very stones the disciples pointed to, and admired; and were of a prodigious size, as well as worth. Some of the stones were, as Josephus ^{F19} says,

"forty five cubits long, five high, and six broad."

Others of them, as he elsewhere affirm ^{F20},

"were twenty five cubits long, eight high, and twelve broad."

And he also tells us, in the same place, that there were,

"in the porches, four rows of pillars: the thickness of each pillar was as much as three men, with their arms stretched out, and joined together, could grasp; the length twenty seven feet, and the number of them an hundred and sixty two, and beautiful to a miracle."

At the size of those stones, and the beauty of the work, it is said ^{F21}, Titus was astonished, when he destroyed the temple; at which time his soldiers plundered it, and took away “the gifts”, with which it is also said to be adorned. These were rich and valuable things which were dedicated to it, and either laid up in it, or hung upon the walls and pillars of it, as it was usual in other temples ^{F23}. These may, intend the golden table given by Pompey, and the spoils which Herod dedicated; and particularly the golden vine, which was a gift of his ^{F24}; besides multitudes of other valuable things, which were greatly enriching and ornamental to it. Now the disciples suggest, by observing these, what a pity it was such a grand edifice should be destroyed; or how unaccountable it was; that a place of so much strength, could easily be demolished.

FOOTNOTES:

F16 Juchasin, fol. 139. 1.

F17 Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 24. 2.

F18 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 4. 1. & Succa, fol. 51. 2.

F19 De Bello Jud. l. 5. c. 5.

F20 Antiq. Jud. l. 15. c. 14.

F21 Egesippus, l. 5. c. 43.

F23 Vid. Ryckium de Capitol. Rom. c. 21

F24 Joseph. Antiq. l. 15.

Matthew 24:2

And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things?

&c.] “These great buildings”, as in Mark; all these goodly stones, so beautiful and large, and so firmly put together: ***verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down;***

or broken, as Munster’s Hebrew Gospel reads it: which prediction had a full and remarkable accomplishment; and which is not only attested by Josephus ^{F25}, who relates, that both the city and temple were dug up, and laid level with the ground; but also by other Jewish writers; who tell us ^{F26} that

“on the ninth of Ab, a day prepared for punishments, Turnus Rufus the wicked, (lkyhhta vrx) , “ploughed up the temple”, and all round about it, to fulfil what is said, “Zion shall be ploughed as a field”.”

Yes, and to fulfil what Christ here says too, that not one stone should be left upon another, which a plough would not admit of.

FOOTNOTES:

F25 De Bello Jud. l. 7. c. 7.

F26 Maimon. Hilch. Taaniot, c. 5. sect. 3. T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 23. 1. & Gloss. in ib.

Matthew 24:3

And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives

Which was on the east of the city of Jerusalem ^{F1}, "over against the temple", as Mark says, and where he could sit and take a full view of it; for the wall on the east side was lower than any other, and that for this reason; that when the high priest burnt the red heifer on this mount, as he did, and sprinkled the blood, he might have a view of the gate of the temple. It is said ^{F2},

"all the walls which were there, were very high, except the eastern wall; for the high priest, when he burned the heifer, stood on the top of the mount of Olives, and directed himself, and looked to the gate of the temple, at the time he sprinkled the blood."

This place, very probably, our Lord chose to sit in, that he might give his disciples an occasion to discourse more largely with him on this subject; and that he might take the opportunity of acquainting them with what would be the signs and forerunners of this desolation, and so it proved:

the disciples came to him privately;

these four at least, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, as Mark relates; and that either separately from the rest of the disciples, or from the multitude: it might not be thought so proper, to ask the following questions before them, and they might suppose that Christ would not be so ready to give an answer to them plainly, before the common people; when they might hope to be indulged with one by him, in private:

saying, tell us, when shall these things be?

That this house will be left desolate, these buildings will be destroyed, and not one stone left upon another? This first question relates purely to the destruction of the temple, and to this Christ first answers, from (Matthew 24:4-23) .

And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Which two are put together, as what they supposed would be at the same time, and immediately follow the destruction of the temple. That he was come in the flesh, and was the true Messiah, they firmly believed: he was with them, and they expected he would continue with them, for they had no notion of his leaving them, and coming again. When he at any time spake of his dying and rising from the dead, they seemed not to understand it: wherefore this coming of his, the sign of which, they inquire, **is not to be understood of his coming a second time to judge the world, at the last day; but of his coming in his kingdom and glory**, which they had observed him some little time before to speak of; declaring that some present should not die, till they saw it: wherefore they wanted to be informed, by what sign they might know, when he would set up his temporal kingdom; for since the temple was to be destroyed, they might hope a new one would be built, much more magnificent than this,

and which is a Jewish notion; and that a new state of things would commence; the present world, or age, would be at a period; and the world to come, they had so often heard of from the Jewish doctors, would take place; and therefore they ask also, of the sign of the end of the world, or present state of things in the Jewish economy: to this Christ answers, in the latter part of this chapter, though not to the sense in which they put the questions; yet in the true sense of the coming of the son of man, and the end of the world; and in such a manner, as might be very instructive to them, and is to us.

FOOTNOTES:

F1 Bartenora in Misn. Middot, c. 1. sect. 3.

F2 Misn. lb. c. 2. sect. 4.

Matthew 24:4

And Jesus answered and said unto them

Not to indulge their curiosity, but to instruct them in things useful to be known, and which might be cautions to them and others, against deceivers; confirm them in the faith of himself, when they should see his predictions accomplished; and be directions to them, of what might shortly be expected.

Take heed that no man deceive you:

by pretending to come from God with a new revelation, setting himself up for the Messiah, after my departure; suggesting himself to be the person designed by God to be the deliverer of Israel, and to be sent by him, to set up a temporal kingdom, in great worldly splendour and glory; promising great names, and high places of honour and trust in it; things which Christ knew his disciples were fond of, and were in danger of being ensnared by; and therefore gives them this suitable and seasonable advice, and caution.

Matthew 24:5

For many shall come in my name

by his orders, or with delegated powers and authority from him; but should assume the name of the Messiah, which was peculiarly his, to themselves; and take upon them his office, and challenge the honour and dignity which belonged unto him:

saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.

This is the first sign, preceding the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem; as there was a general expectation among the Jews of a Messiah; that is, of one that should arise and deliver them from the Roman yoke, which was the common idea tacked to that word; in this period of time, many set up themselves to be deliverers and redeemers of the people of Israel: who had each of them their followers in great numbers, whom they imposed upon, and brought to destruction. Of this sort was Theudas, not he that Gamaliel speaks of, (Acts 5:36) for he was before this time; but one that was in the time of Claudius Caesar, when Cuspius Fadus was governor of Judea; who persuaded a

great number to follow him to the river Jordan, which he promised to divide, by a word of command, and give them a passage over; and thereby, as the historian observes ^{F3}, (pollouv hpathshn) , “he deceived many”; which is the very thing that is here predicted: but he and his company were routed Fadus, and his head cut off. There was another called the Egyptian, mentioned in (Acts 21:38) who made an uproar, and led four thousand cut-throats into the wilderness; and this same man persuaded thirty thousand men to follow him to Mount Olivet, promising a free passage into the city; but he being vanquished by Felix, then governor of Judea; fled, and many of his followers were killed and taken ^{F4}: and besides, there were many more magicians and impostors, that pretended to signs and wonders, and promised the people deliverance from their evils, by whom they were imposed upon to their ruin. There were others also besides these, that set up for deliverers, who called themselves by the name of the Messiah. Among these, we may reckon Simon Magus, who gave out that he was some great one; yea, expressly, that he was the word of God, and the Son of God ^{F5}, which were known names of the Messiah; and Dositheus the Samaritan, asserted himself to be Christ ^{F6}; and also Menander affirmed, that no man could be saved, unless he was baptized in his name ^{F7}; these are instances before the destruction of Jerusalem, and confirm the prophecy here delivered.

FOOTNOTES:

F3 Joseph. Antiq. l. 20. c. 2.

F4 Joseph. Antiq. l. 20. c. 6.

F5 Jerom in loc. Iren. adv. Haeres. l. 1. c. 20.

F6 Origen contr. Cels. l. 1. p. 44.

F7 Tertull. de prescript. Haeret. c. 46.

Matthew 24:6

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars

This is the second sign of the destruction of Jerusalem: it is observable that this, and some of the following signs, are given by the Jews, as signs of the Messiah's coming; whereas they were forerunners of their ruin, for the rejection of him who was already come. They suppose the Messiah will come in the seventh year, or the year of rest and release:

“On the seventh year (they say ^{F8}) will be (twmxlm) , “wars”: and in the going out, or at the close of the seventh year, the son of David will come.”

Which wars, the gloss says, will be between the nations of the world, and Israel. Here wars may mean the commotions, insurrections, and seditions, against the Romans, and their governors; and the intestine slaughters committed among them, some time before the siege of Jerusalem, and the destruction of it. Under Cureanus the Roman governor, a sedition was raised on the day of the passover, in which twenty thousand perished; after that, in another tumult, ten thousand were destroyed by cut-throats: in Ascalon two thousand more, in Ptolemais two thousand, at Alexandria fifty thousand, at Damascus ten thousand, and elsewhere in great numbers ^{F9}. The Jews were also put into great consternation, upon hearing the design of the Roman emperor, to put up his image in their temple:

see that ye be not troubled;

so as to leave the land of Judea as yet, and quit the preaching of the Gospel there, as if the final destruction was just at hand;

for all these things must come to pass;

these wars and the reports of them and the panic on account of them; these commotions and slaughters, and terrible devastations by the sword must be; being determined by God, predicted by Christ, and brought upon the Jews by their own wickedness; and suffered in righteous judgment, for their sin:

but the end is not yet;

meaning not the end of the world, but the end of Jerusalem, and the temple, the end of the Jewish state; which were to continue, and did continue after these disturbances in it.

FOOTNOTES:

F8 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 97. 1. & Megilia, fol. 17. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 3. 3, 4.

F9 Vid. Joseph. Antiq. l. 20. c. 6. & de Bello Jud. l. 2

Matthew 24:7

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom

This seems to be a distinct and third sign, foreboding the general calamity of the Jews; that there should be not only seditions and intestine wars, in the midst of their country, but there should be wars in other nations, one with another; and with the Jews, and the Jews with them: and this also is made a sign of the Messiah's coming by them, for so they say ^{F11};

“when thou seest, (wlab wla twrgtm twyklm) , “kingdoms stirred up one against another”, look for the feet of the Messiah: know thou that so it shall be; for so it was in the days of Abraham: by the means of kingdoms stirred up one against another, redemption came to Abraham.”

Poor blinded creatures! when these very things were the forerunners of their destruction. And so it was, the Jewish nation rose up against others, the Samaritans, Syrians, and Romans: there were great commotions in the Roman empire, between Otho and Vitellius, and Vitellius and Vespasian; and at length the Romans rose up against the Jews, under the latter, and entirely destroyed them; compare the writings in 2 Esdras:

“And one shall undertake to fight against another, one city against another, one place against another, one people against another, and one realm against another.” (2 Esdras 13:31)

"the beginning of sorrows and great mournings; the beginning of famine and great death; the beginning of wars, and the powers shall stand in fear; the beginning of evils! what shall I do when these evils shall come?" (2 Esdras 16:18)

"Therefore when there shall be seen earthquakes and uproars of the people in the world:" (2 Esdras 9:3)

And there shall be famines:

a fourth sign of the desolation of the city and temple, and which the Jews also say, shall go before the coming of the Messiah:

"in the second year (of the week of years) in which the son of David comes, they say ^{F12}, there will be "arrows of famine" sent forth; and in the third year, (lwdg ber) , "a great famine": and men, women, and children, and holy men, and men of business, shall die."

But these have been already; they followed the Messiah, and preceded their destruction: one of these famines was in Claudius Caesar's time, was foretold by Agabus, and is mentioned in (Acts 11:28) and most dreadful ones there were, whilst Jerusalem was besieged, and before its utter ruin, related by Josephus.

And pestilences:

a pestilence is described by the Jews after this manner ^{F13}:

"a city that produces a thousand and five hundred footmen, as Cephar Aco, and nine dead men are carried out of it in three days, one after another, lo! (rbd hz) , "this is a pestilence"; but if in one day, or in four days, it is no pestilence; and a city that produces five hundred footmen, as Cephar Amiko, and three dead men are carried out of it in three days, one after another, lo! this is a pestilence."

These commonly attend famines, and are therefore mentioned together; and when the one was, the other may be supposed sooner or later to be:

and earthquakes in divers places

of the world; as, at Crete ^{F14}, and in divers cities in Asia ^{F15}, in the times of Nero: particularly the three cities of Phrygia, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse; which were near to each other, and are all said to perish this way, in his reign ^{F16};

"and Rome itself felt a tremor, in the reign of Galba ^{F17}."

FOOTNOTES:

F11 Bereshit Rabba, sect. 42. fol. 37. 1.

F12 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 97. 1. Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 15.

F13 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 21. & 19. 1. Maimon. Hilch. Taaniot, c. 2. sect. 5.

F14 Philostrate. in vit. Apollon. l. 4. c. 11.

F15 Sueton. in vit. Nero, c. 48.

F16 Orosius, l. 7. c. 7.

F17 Sueton. in vit. Galba, c. 13.

Matthew 24:8***All these are the beginning of sorrows***

They were only a prelude unto them, and forerunners of them; they were only some foretastes of what would be, and were far from being the worst that should be endured. These were but light, in comparison of what befell the Jews, in their dreadful destruction. The word here used, signifies the sorrows and pains of a woman in travail. The Jews expect great sorrows and distresses in the times of the Messiah, and use a word to express them by, which answers to this, and call them, (xyvmhylbx , “the sorrows of the Messiah”; (ylbx) , they say ^{F18}, signifies the sorrows of a woman in travail; and the Syriac version uses the same word here. These they represent to be very great, and express much concern to be delivered from them. They ^{F19} ask,

“what shall a man do, to be delivered from “the sorrows of the Messiah?” He must employ himself in the law, and in liberality.”

And again ^{F20},

“he that observes the three meals on the sabbath day, shall be delivered from three punishments; from “the sorrows of the Messiah”, from the judgment of hell, and from Gog and Magog.”

But alas there was no other way of escaping them, but by faith in the true Messiah, Jesus; and it was for their disbelief and rejection of him, that these came upon them.

FOOTNOTES:

F18 Gloss. in T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 118. 2.

F19 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 98. 2.

F20 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 118. 2.

Matthew 24:9

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted

Our Lord proceeds to acquaint his disciples, what should befall them in this interval; and quite contrary to their expectations, who were looking for a temporal kingdom, and worldly grandeur, assures them of afflictions, persecutions, and death; that about these times, when these various signs should appear, and this beginning of sorrows take place; whilst these will be fulfilling in Judea, and other parts of the world; the Jews continuing in their obstinacy and unbelief, would deliver them up to the civil magistrates, to be scourged and imprisoned by them; either to their own sanhedrim, as were Peter and John; or to the Roman governors, Gallio, Festus, and Felix, as was the Apostle Paul.

And shall kill you;

as the two James', Peter, Paul, and even all the apostles, excepting John, who suffered martyrdom, and that before the destruction of Jerusalem:

and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake;

as the apostles and first Christians were, both by Jews and Gentiles; the latter being stirred up against them by the former, wherever they came, and for no other reason, but because they professed and preached in the name of Christ, as the Acts of the Apostles show: and their hatred proceeded so far, as to charge all their calamities upon them; as war, famine, pestilence, earthquakes as the apologies of the first Christians declare.

Matthew 24:10

And then shall many be offended

That is, many who had been hearers of the apostles, and professors of the Christian religion; who were highly pleased with it, and were strenuous advocates for it, whilst things were tolerably quiet and easy; but when they saw the apostles, some of them beaten, and imprisoned; others put to death, and others forced to fly from place to place; and persecutions and affliction, because of Christ and his Gospel, likely to befall themselves, would be discouraged hereby, and stumble at the cross; and fall off from the faith of the Gospel, and the profession of it:

and shall betray one another;

meaning, that the apostates, who would fall off from the Christian religion, would prove treacherous to true believers, and give in their names to the persecutors, or inform them where they were, that they might take them, or deliver them into their hands themselves: these are the false brethren, the Apostle Paul was in perils among:

and shall hate one another;

not that the true Christians should hate these false brethren, any more than betray them; for they are taught to love all men, even their enemies; but these apostates should hate them, in whose communion they before were, and to whom they belonged; and even to a very great degree of hatred, as it often is seen, that such who turn their backs on Christ, and his Gospel, prove the most bitter enemies, and most violent persecutors of its preachers and

followers.

Matthew 24:11

And many false prophets shall rise

Out of, from among the churches of Christ; at least under the name of Christians; for false teachers are here meant, men of heretical principles, pretending to a spirit of prophecy, and to new revelations, and a better understanding of the Scriptures; such as Simon Magus, Ebion, and Cerinthus, who denied the proper deity, and real humanity of Christ; Carpocrates, and the Gnostics his followers, the Nicolaitans, Hymeneus, Philetus, and others:

and shall deceive many:

as they all of them had their followers, and large numbers of them, whose faith was subverted by them; and who followed their pernicious ways, being imposed upon and seduced by their fair words, specious pretences, and licentious practices.

Matthew 24:12

And because iniquity shall abound

Meaning, either the malice and wickedness of outrageous persecutors, which should greatly increase; or the treachery and hatred of the apostates; or the errors and heresies of false teachers; or the wickedness that prevailed in the lives and conversations of some, that were called Christians: for each of these seem to be hinted at in the context, and may be all included, as making up the abounding iniquity here spoken of; the consequence of which would be,

the love of many shall wax cold.

This would be the case of many, but not of all; for in the midst of this abounding iniquity, there were some, the ardour of whose love to Christ, to his Gospel, and to the saints, did not abate: but then there were many, whose zeal for Christ, through the violence of persecution, was greatly damped; and through the treachery of false brethren, were shy of the saints themselves, not knowing who to trust; and through the principles of the false teachers, the power of godliness, and the vital heat of religion, were almost lost; and through a love of the world, and of carnal ease and pleasure, love to the saints was grown very chill, and greatly left; as the instances of Demas, and those that forsook the Apostle Paul, at his first answer before Nero, show. This might be true of such, who were real believers in Christ; who might fall under great decays, through the prevalence of iniquity; since it does not say their love shall be lost, but wax cold.

Matthew 24:13

But he that shall endure to the end

In the profession of faith in Christ, notwithstanding the violent persecutions of wicked men; and in the pure and incorrupt doctrines of the Gospel, whilst many are deceived by the false teachers that shall arise; and in holiness of life and conversation, amidst all the impurities of the age; and shall patiently bear all afflictions, to the end of his life, or to the end of sorrows, of which the above mentioned were the beginning:

the same shall be saved;

with a temporal salvation, when Jerusalem, and the unbelieving inhabitants of it shall be destroyed: for those that believed in Christ, many of them, through persecution, were obliged to remove from thence; and others, by a voice from heaven, were bid to go out of it, as they did; and removed to Pella, a village a little beyond Jordan ^{F21}, and so were preserved from the general calamity; and also with an everlasting salvation, which is the case of all that persevere to the end, as all true believers in Christ will.

FOOTNOTES:

F21 Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 5.

Matthew 24:14

And this Gospel of the kingdom

Which Christ himself preached, and which he called and sent his apostles to preach, in all the cities of Judah; by which means men were brought into the kingdom of the Messiah, or Gospel dispensation; and which treated both of the kingdom of grace and glory, and pointed out the saints' meetness for the kingdom of heaven, and their right unto it, and gives the best account of the glories of it:

shall be preached in all the world;

not only in Judea, where it was now confined, and that by the express orders of Christ himself; but in all the nations of the world, for which the apostles had their commission enlarged, after our Lord's resurrection; when they were bid to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; and when the Jews put away the Gospel from them, they accordingly turned to the Gentiles; and before the destruction of Jerusalem, it was preached to all the nations under the heavens; and churches were planted in most places, through the ministry of it:

for a witness unto all nations;

meaning either for a witness against all such in them, as should reject it; or as a testimony of Christ and salvation, unto all such as should believe in him:

and then shall the end come;

not the end of the world, as the Ethiopic version reads it, and others understand it; but the end of the Jewish state, the end of the city and temple: so that the universal preaching of the Gospel all over the world, was the last criterion and sign, of the destruction of Jerusalem; and the account of that itself next follows, with the dismal circumstances which attended it.

Matthew 24:15

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,

&c.] From signs, Christ proceeds to the immediate cause of the destruction of Jerusalem; which was, "the abomination of desolation", or the desolating

abomination; or that abominable thing, which threatened and brought desolation upon the city, temple, and nation: by which is meant, not any statue placed in the temple by the Romans, or their order; not the golden eagle which Herod set upon the temple gate, for that was before Christ said these words; nor the image of Tiberius Caesar, which Pilate is said to bring into the temple; for this, if true, must be about this time; whereas Christ cannot be thought to refer to anything so near at hand; much less the statue of Adrian, set in the most holy place, which was an hundred and thirty years and upwards, after the destruction of the city and temple; nor the statue of Titus, who destroyed both, which does not appear: ever to be set up, or attempted; nor of Caligula, which, though ordered, was prevented being placed there: but the Roman army is designed; see (Luke 21:20) which was the (Mmvm Myuwqv Pnk) , “the wing”, or “army of abominations making desolate”, (Daniel 9:27) . Armies are called wings, (Isaiah 8:8) and the Roman armies were desolating ones to the Jews, and to whom they were an abomination; not only because they consisted of Heathen men, and uncircumcised persons, but chiefly because of the images of their gods, which were upon their ensigns: for images and idols were always an abomination to them; so the “filthiness” which Hezekiah ordered to be carried out of the holy place, (2 Chronicles 29:5) is by the Targum called, (aqwxyr) , “an abomination”; and this, by the Jewish writers ^{F23}, is said to be an idol, which Ahaz had placed upon the altar; and such was the abomination of desolation, which Antiochus caused to be set upon the altar:

“Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;” (1 Maccabees 1:54)

And so the Talmudic writers, by the abomination that makes desolate, in (9:27) to which Christ here refers, understand an image, which they say ^{F24} one Apostomus, a Grecian general, who burnt their law, set up in the temple. Now our Lord observes, that when they should see the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem, with their ensigns flying, and these abominations on them, they might conclude its desolation was near at hand; and he does not so much mean his apostles, who would be most of them dead, or in other countries, when this would come to pass; but any of his disciples and followers, or any persons whatever, by whom should be seen this desolating abomination, ***spoken of by Daniel the prophet:***

not in (Daniel 11:31) which is spoken of the abomination in the times of Antiochus; but either in (Daniel 12:11) or rather in (Daniel 9:27) since this desolating abomination is that, which should follow the cutting off of the Messiah, and the ceasing of the daily sacrifice. It is to be observed, that Daniel is here called a prophet, contrary to what the Jewish writers say ^{F25}, who deny him to be one; though one of ^{F26} no inconsiderable note among them affirms, that he attained to the end, (yyawbnhlwbgh) , “of the prophetic border”, or the ultimate degree of prophecy: when therefore this that Daniel, under a spirit of prophecy, spoke of should be seen,

standing in the holy place;

near the walls, and round about the holy city Jerusalem, so called from the

sanctuary and worship of God in it; and which, in process of time, stood in the midst of it, and in the holy temple, and destroyed both; then

whoso readeth, let him understand:

that is, whoever then reads the prophecy of Daniel; will easily understand the meaning of it, and will see and know for certain, that now it is accomplished; and will consider how to escape the desolating judgment, unless he is given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart; which was the case of the greater part of the nation.

FOOTNOTES:

F23 R. David Kimchi, & R. Sol. ben Melech, in 2 Chron. xxix. 5.

F24 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 28. 2. & Gloss. in ib.

F25 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 94. 1. & Megilla, fol. 3. 1. & Tzeror Ham, mor, fol. 46. 4. Zohar in Num. fol. 61. 1.

F26 Jacchiades in Dan. i. 17.

Matthew 24:16

Then let them which be in Judea

When this signal is given, let it be taken notice of and observed; let them that are in the city of Jerusalem, depart out of it; or who are in any other parts of Judea, in any of the towns, or cities thereof; let them not betake themselves to Jerusalem, imagining they may be safe there, in so strong and fortified a place, but let them flee elsewhere; see Luke 21:21) and accordingly it is observed, that many did flee about this time; and it is remarked by several interpreters, and which Josephus ^{F1} takes notice of with surprise, that Cestius Gallus having advanced with his army to Jerusalem, and besieged it, on a sudden, without any cause, raised the siege, and withdrew his army, when the city might have been easily taken; by which means a signal was made; and an opportunity given to the Christians, to make their escape: which they accordingly did, and went over Jordan, as Eusebius says ^{F2}, to a place called Pella; so that when Titus came a few mouths after, there was not a Christian in the city, but they had fled as they are here bidden to

flee into the mountains;

or any places of shelter and refuge: these are mentioned particularly, because they are usually such; and design either the mountains in Judea, or in the adjacent countries. The Syriac and Persic versions read in the singular number, "into the mountain"; and it is reported that many of them did fly, particularly to Mount Libanus ^{F3}.

FOOTNOTES:

F1 De Bello Jud. l. 2. c. 19. sect. 7.

F2 Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 5. p. 75.

Matthew 24:17

Let him which is on the housetop

Who should be there either for his devotion or recreation; for the houses of the Jews were built with flat roofs and battlements about them, which they made use of both for diversion and pleasure, and for private meditation and prayer, for social conversation, and sometimes for public preaching; see (>Matthew 10:27) (Acts 10:9)

not come down to take anything out of his house:

that is, let him not come down in the inner way, but by the stairs, or ladder, on the outside of the house, which was usual. They had two ways of going out of, and into their houses; the one they call ^{F4}, (Myxtp Krd) , “the way of the doors”; the other, (Nyg Krd) , “the way of the roof”: upon which the gloss is,

“to go up on the outside, (Mlwp Krd) , “by way” or “means” of a ladder, fixed at the entrance of the door of the upper room, and from thence he goes down into the house by a ladder;”

and in the same way they could come out; see (Mark 2:4) and let him not go into his house to take any of his goods, or money, or food along with him necessary for his sustenance in his flight; lest, whilst he is busy in taking care of these, he loses his life, or, at least, the opportunity of making his escape; so sudden is this desolation represented to be.

FOOTNOTES:

F4 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 117. 1.

Matthew 24:18

Neither let him which is in the field

Ploughing, or sowing, or employed in any other parts of husbandry, or rural business,

return back to take clothes;

for it was usual to work in the fields without their clothes, as at ploughing and sowing. Hence those words of Virgil ^{F5}.

“Nudus ara, sere nudus, hyems ignava colono.”

Upon which Servius observes, that in good weather, when the sun warms the earth, men might plough and sow without their clothes: and it is reported by

the historian ^{F6} of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, that the messengers who were sent to him, from Minutius the consul, whom he had delivered from a siege, found him ploughing naked beyond the Tiber: not that he was entirely naked, but was stripped of his upper garments: and it is usual for people that work in the fields to strip themselves to their shirts, and lay their clothes at the corner of the field, or at the land's end; and which we must suppose to be the case here: for our Lord's meaning is not, that the man working in the field, should not return home to fetch his clothes, which were not left there; they were brought with him into the field, but put off; and laid aside in some part of it while at work; but that as soon as he had the news of Jerusalem being besieged, he should immediately make the best of his way, and flee to the mountains, as Lot was bid to do at the burning of Sodom; and he might not return to the corner of the field, or land's end, where his clothes lay, as Lot was not to look behind; though if his clothes lay in the way of his flight, he might take them up, but might not go back for them, so sudden and swift should be the desolation. The Vulgate Latin reads, in the singular number, "his coat"; and so do the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and so it was read in four copies of Beza's, in three of Stephens's, and in others; and may design the upper coat or garment, which was put off whilst at work.

FOOTNOTES:

F5 Georgic. l. 1.

F6 Aurel Victor. de illustr. viris, c. 20.

Matthew 24:19

And woe unto them that are with child

Not that it should be criminal for them to be with child, or a judgment on them; for it was always esteemed a blessing to be fruitful, and bear children: but this expresses the miserable circumstances such would be in, who, by reason of their heavy burdens, would not be able to make so speedy a flight, as the case would require; or would be obliged to stay at home, and endure all the miseries of the siege: so that these words, as the following are not expressive of sin, or punishment, but of pity and concern for their misery and distress:

and to them that give suck in those days;

whose tender affection to their infants will not suffer them to leave them behind them; and yet such their weakness, that they will not be able to carry them with them; at least, they must be great hindrances to their speedy flight. So that the case of these is much worse than that of men on the house top, or in the field, who could much more easily leave their goods and clothes, than these their children, as well as had more agility and strength of body to flee. So (twqynymwtwrbwe) , "women with child, and that give suck"; are mentioned together in the Jewish writings, as such as were excused from certain fasts, though obliged to others ^{F7}.

FOOTNOTES:

F7 T. Hieros. Taanioth, fol. 64. 3. Maimon. Hilch. Taanioth, c. 5. sect. 10.

Matthew 24:20***But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter***

When days are short, and unfit for long journeys, and roads are bad, and sometimes not passable, through large snows, or floods of water; and when to dwell in desert places, and lodge in mountains, must be very uncomfortable: wherefore Christ directs to pray to God, who has the disposal of all events, and of the timing of them, that he would so order things in the course of his providence, that their flight might not be in such a season of the year, when travelling would be very difficult and troublesome. Dr. Lightfoot observes, from a Jewish writer ^{F8}, that it is remarked as a favour of God in the destruction of the first temple, that it happened in the summer, and not in winter; whose words are these:

“God vouchsafed a great favour to Israel, for they ought to have gone out of the land on the tenth day of the month Tebeth; as he saith (Ezekiel 24:2) “son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day”: what then did the Lord, holy and blessed? If they shall now go out in the winter, (saith he,) they will all die; therefore he prolonged the time to them, and carried them away in summer.”

And since therefore they received such a favour from him at the destruction of the first temple, there was encouragement to pray to him, that they might be indulged with the like favour when Jerusalem should be besieged again:

neither on the sabbath day:

the word “day” is not in the Greek text; and some ^{F9} have been of opinion, that the “sabbatical year”, or the seventh year, is meant, when no fruits would be found in the fields, and a great scarcity of provisions among people; who would not have a sufficiency, and much less any to spare to strangers fleeing from their native places; but rather the sabbath day, or “day of the sabbath”, as the Persic version reads it, is designed; and Beza says, four of his copies read it in the genitive case: and so four of Stephens’s. And the reason why our Lord put them on praying, that their flight might not be on the sabbath day, was, because he knew not only that the Jews, who believed not in him, would not suffer them to travel on a sabbath day more than two thousand cubits; which, according to their traditions ^{F11}, was a sabbath day’s journey; and which would not be sufficient for their flight to put them out of danger; but also, that those that did believe in him, particularly the Jerusalem Jews, would be all of them fond of the law of Moses, and scrupulous of violating any part of it, and especially that of the sabbath; see (Acts 21:20) . And though the Jews did allow, that the sabbath might be violated where life was in danger, and that it was

lawful to defend themselves against an enemy on the sabbath day; yet this did not universally obtain; and it was made a question of, after the time of Christ, whether it was lawful to flee from danger on the sabbath day; of which take the following account ^{F12}.

“Our Rabbins teach, that he that is pursued by Gentiles, or by thieves, may profane the sabbath for the sake of saving his life: and so we find of David, when Saul sought to slay him, he fled from him, and escaped. Our Rabbins say, that it happened that evil writings (or edicts) came from the government to the great men of Tzippore; and they went, and said to R. Eleazar ben Prata, evil edicts are come to us from the government, what dost thou say? (xrbn) , “shall we flee?” and he was afraid to say to them “flee”; but he said to them with a nod, why do you ask me? go and ask Jacob, and Moses, and David; as it is written, of Jacob, (Hosea 12:12) “and Jacob fled”; and so of Moses, (Exodus 2:15) “and Moses fled”; and so of David, (1 Samuel 19:18) “and David fled, and escaped”: and he (God) says, (Isaiah 26:20) “come my people, enter into thy chambers”.”

From whence, it is plain, it was a question with the doctors in Tzippore, which was a town in Galilee, where there was an university, whether it was lawful to flee on the sabbath day or not; and though the Rabbi they applied to was of opinion it was lawful, yet he was fearful of speaking out his sense plainly, and therefore delivered it by signs and hints. Now our Lord’s meaning, in putting them on this petition, was, not to prevent the violation of the seventh day sabbath, or on account of the sacredness of it, which he knew would be abolished, and was abolished before this time; but he says this with respect to the opinion of the Jews, and “Judaizing” Christians, who, taking that day to be sacred, and fleeing on it unlawful, would find a difficulty with themselves, and others, to make their escape; otherwise it was as lawful to flee and travel on that day, as in the winter season; though both, for different reasons, incommodious.

FOOTNOTES:

F8 Taachuma, fol. 57. 2.

F9 Vid. Reland. Antiq. Heb. par. 4. c. 10. sect. 1. & Hammond in loc.

F11 Maimon. Hilch. Sabbat, c. 27. sect. 1.

F12 Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 23. fol. 231. 4.

Matthew 24:21

For then shall be great tribulation

This is urged as a reason for their speedy flight; since the calamity that would come upon those who should remain in the city, what through the sword, famine, pestilence, murders, robberies would

be such as was not since the beginning of the world, to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The burning of Sodom and Gomorrha, the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, their captivity in Babylon, and all their distresses and afflictions in the times of the Maccabees, are nothing to be compared with the calamities which befell the Jews in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Great desolations have been made in the besieging and at the taking of many famous cities, as Troy, Babylon, Carthage but none of them are to be mentioned with the deplorable case of this city. Whoever reads Josephus's account will be fully convinced of this; and readily join with him, who was an eyewitness of it, when he says {m}, that

“never did any city suffer such things, nor was there ever any generation that more abounded in malice or wickedness.”

And indeed, all this came upon them for their impenitence and infidelity, and for their rejection and murdering of the Son of God; for as never any before, or since, committed the sin they did, or ever will, so there never did, or will, the same calamity befall a nation, as did them.

FOOTNOTES:

F13 De Bello Jud. l. 6. c. 11.

Matthew 24:22

And except those days should be shortened

That is, those days of tribulation which commenced at the siege of Jerusalem; and therefore cannot refer to the times before it, and the shortening of them by it, which were very dreadful and deplorable through the murders and robberies of the cut-throats and zealots; but to those after the siege began, which were very distressing to those that were within; and which, if they had not been shortened, or if the siege had been lengthened out further,

there should no flesh be saved;

not one Jew in the city of Jerusalem would have been saved; they must everyone have perished by famine, or pestilence, or sword, or by the intestine wars and murders among themselves: nor indeed, if the siege had continued, would it have fared better with the inhabitants of the other parts of the country, among whom also many of the same calamities prevailed and spread themselves; so that, in all likelihood, if these days had been continued a little longer, there had not been a Jew left in all the land.

But for the elect's sake;

those who were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to believe in him, and to be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; both

those that were in the city, or, at least, who were to spring from some that were there, as their immediate offspring, or in future ages, and therefore they, and their posterity, must not be cut off; and also those chosen ones, and real believers, who were at Pella, and in the mountains, and other places, for the sake of these, and that they might be delivered from these pressing calamities,

those days shall be shortened:

for otherwise, if God had not preserved a seed, a remnant, according to the election of grace, that should be saved, they had been as Sodom and as Gomorrha, not one would have escaped. The shortening of those days is not to be understood literally, as if the natural days, in which this tribulation was, were to be shorter than usual. The Jews indeed often speak of the shortening of days in this sense, as miraculously done by God: so they say^{F14}, that

“five miracles were wrought for our father Jacob, when he went from Beersheba to go to Haran. The first miracle was, that (amwydywev hyl wruqta) , “the hours of the day were shortened for him”, and the sun set before its time, because his word desired to speak with him.”

They also say^{F15},

“that the day in which Ahaz died, was shortened ten hours, that they might not mourn for him; and which afterwards rose up, and in the day that Hezekiah was healed, ten hours were added to it.”

But the meaning here is, that the siege of Jerusalem, and the calamities attending it, should be sooner ended: not than God had determined, but than the sin of the Jews deserved, and the justice of God might have required in strict severity, and might be reasonably expected, considering the aggravated circumstances of their iniquities. A like manner of speech is used by the Karaite Jews^{F16}, who say,

“if we walk in our law, why is our captivity prolonged, and there is not found balm for our wounds? and why are not (Mhymy wjemtn) , “the days” of the golden and silver kingdom “lessened”, for the righteousness of the righteous, which were in their days?”

FOOTNOTES:

F14 Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel, & Targum Hieros. in Gem xxviii. 10.

F15 R. Sol. Jarchi in Isa. xxxviii. 8.

Matthew 24:23

Then if any man shall say unto you

Either at the time when the siege shall be begun, and the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place; or during the days of tribulation, whilst the siege lasted; or after those days were shortened, and the city destroyed, and the Roman army was gone with their captives: when some, that were scattered up and down in the country, would insinuate to their countrymen, that the Messiah was in such a place: saying,

lo! here is Christ, or there, believe it not;

for both during the time of the siege, there were such that sprung up, and pretended to be Messiahs, and deliverers of them from the Roman power, and had their several abettors; one saying he was in such place, and another that he was in such a place; and so spirited up the people not to fly, nor to deliver up the city; and also, after the city was taken and destroyed, one and another set up for the Messiah. Very quickly after, one Jonathan, a very wicked man, led many into the desert of Cyrene, promising to show them signs and wonders, and was overthrown by Catullius, the Roman governor ^{F17}; and after that, in the times of Adrian, the famous Barcochab set up for the Messiah, and was encouraged by R. Akiba, and a multitude of Jews ^{F18}.

FOOTNOTES:

F17 Joseph. Antiq. l. 7. c. 12.

F18 Ganz. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 28. 2.

Matthew 24:24

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets,

&c.] Such as the above mentioned: these false Christs had their false prophets, who endeavoured to persuade the people to believe them to be the Messiah, as Barcochab had Akiba, who applied many prophecies to him. This man was called Barcochab, which signifies the son of a star, in allusion to (Numbers 24:17) he was crowned by the Jews, and proclaimed the Messiah by Akiba; upon which a Roman army was sent against him, and a place called Bitter was besieged, and taken, and he, and a prodigious number of Jews were destroyed. This deceiver was afterwards, by them, called Barcoziba, the son of a lie:

and shall show great signs and wonders;

make an appearance of doing them, though they really did them not: so that Jonathan, before mentioned, pretended to show signs and sights; and Barcochab made as if flame came out of his mouth; and many of the Jewish doctors in these times, and following, gave themselves up to sorcery, and the magic art; and are, many of them, often said ^{F19} to be (Myonb Mydmwlm) , “expert in wonders”, or miracles:

if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

By whom we are to understand, not the choicest believers, or the persevering Christians: not but that such who are truly converted, are choice believers in Christ, and persevering Christians are undoubtedly the elect of God; but then the reason why they are elect, and why they are so called, is not because they are converted, are choice believers, and persevering Christians; but, on the contrary, the reason why they are converted, become true believers, and persevere to the end, is, because they are elected; conversion, faith, and perseverance being not the causes or conditions, but the fruits and effects of election: besides to talk of the final seduction of a persevering Christian, is a contradiction in terms. Such an interpretation of the phrase must be absurd and impertinent; for who knows not that a persevering Christian cannot be finally and totally deceived? But by the elect are meant, a select number of particular persons of Adam's posterity, whom God, of his sovereign goodwill and pleasure, without respect to their faith, holiness, and good works, has chosen, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, both to grace and glory: and to deceive these finally and totally, is impossible, as is here suggested; not impossible, considering their own weakness, and the craftiness of deceivers, who, if left to themselves, and the power of such deception, and the working of Satan with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, might easily be seduced; but considering the purposes and promises of God concerning them, the provisions of his grace for them, the security of them in the hands of Christ, and their preservation by the mighty power of God, their final and total deception is not only difficult, but impossible. They may be, and are deceived before conversion; this is one part of their character whilst unregenerate, "foolish, disobedient, deceived", (Titus 3:3) yea, they may be, and oftentimes are, deceived after conversion; but then this is in part only, and not totally; in some lesser, and not in the greater matters of faith; not so as to let go their hold of Christ their head, and quit the doctrine of salvation by him, or fall into damnable heresies: they may be seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel, but not finally; for they shall be recovered out of the snare of the devil, and not to be left to perish in such deceivings. This clause, as it expresses the power of deceivers, and the efficacy of Satan, so the influence and certainty of electing grace and the sure and firm perseverance of the saints, to the end, notwithstanding the cunning and craft of men and devils; for if these, with all their signs and wonders, could not deceive them, it may be pronounced impossible that they ever should be finally and totally deceived.

FOOTNOTES:

F19 T. Bab. Meila, fol. 17. 2. Juchasin, fol. 20. 1, 2. & 42. 2. & 56. 2. & 77. 1. & 96. 2.

Matthew 24:25

Behold, I have told you before.

] Meaning not before in this discourse, though he had in (Matthew 24:5

Matthew 24:11) signified also, that false Christs, and false prophets should arise, but before these things came to pass; so that they had sufficient notice and warning of them, and would be inexcusable if they were not upon their guard against them; and which, when they came to pass, would furnish out a considerable argument in proof of him, as the true Messiah, against all these false ones, showing him to be omniscient; and so would serve to establish their faith in him, and be a means of securing them from such deceivers.

Matthew 24:26

Wherefore if they shall say unto you

Any of the false prophets, or the deluded followers of false Christs:

behold, he is in the desert, go not forth:

that is, should they affirm, that the Messiah is in such a wilderness, in the wilderness of Judea, or in any other desert place, do not go out of the places where you are to see, or hear, and know the truth of things; lest you should, in any respect, be stumbled, ensnared, and brought into danger. It was usual for these impostors to lead their followers into deserts, pretending to work wonders in such solitary places: so, during the siege, Simon, the son of Giora, collected together many thousands in the mountainous and desert parts of Judea ^{F20}; and the above mentioned Jonathan, after the destruction of the city, led great multitudes into the desert:

behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not;

or should others say behold, or for certain, the Messiah is in some one of the secret and fortified places of the temple; where, during some time of the siege, were John and Eleazar, the heads of the zealots ^{F21}; do not believe them. Some reference may be had to the chamber of secrets, which was in the temple ^{F23};

“for in the sanctuary there were two chambers; one was called (Myavx tkvl) , “the chamber of secrets”, and the other the chamber of vessels.”

Or else some respect may be had to the notions of the Jews, concerning the Messiah, which they imbibed about these times, and ever since retained, that he was born the day Jerusalem was destroyed, but is hid, for their sins, in some secret place, and will in time be revealed ^{F24}. Some say, that he is hid in the sea; others, in the walks of the garden of Eden; and others, that he sits among the lepers at the gates of Rome ^{F25}. The Syriac version here reads in the singular number, “in the bedchamber”; in some private apartment, where he remains till a proper time of showing himself offers, for fear of the Romans: but these are all idle notions, and none of them to be believed. The true Messiah is come, and has showed himself to Israel; and even the giving out these things discovers a consciousness, and a conviction that the Messiah is come.

FOOTNOTES:

F20 Joseph de Bello. Jud. l. 5. c. 7.

F21 Ib. c. 6. l. 4.

F23 Misn. Shekalim, c. 5. sect. 6.

F24 Aben Ezra in Cant. vii. 5. Targum in Mic. iv. 8.

F25 Vid. Buxtorf. Synag. Jud. c. 50.

Matthew 24:27

For as the lightning cometh out of the east

The eastern part of the horizon, ***and shineth even unto the west;***
to the western part of it, with great clearness; in a moment; in the
twinkling of an eye, filling the whole intermediate space; ***so shall also the
coming of the son of man be;***

which must be understood not of his last coming to judgment, though that will
be sudden, visible, and universal; he will at once come to, and be seen by
all, in the clouds of heaven, and not in deserts and secret chambers: nor of
his spiritual coming in the more sudden, and clear, and powerful preaching of
the Gospel all over the Gentile world; for this was to be done before the
destruction of Jerusalem: but of his coming in his wrath and vengeance to
destroy that people, their nation, city, and temple: so that after this to
look for the Messiah in a desert, or secret chamber, must argue great
stupidity and blindness; when his coming was as sudden, visible, powerful,
and general, to the destruction of that nation, as the lightning that comes
from the east, and, in a moment, shines to the west.

Matthew 24:28

For wheresoever the carcass is

Not Christ, as he is held forth in the Gospel, crucified and slain, through
whose death is the savour of life, and by whom salvation is, and to whom
sensible sinners flock, encouraged by the ministry of the word; and much less
Christ considered as risen, exalted, and coming in great glory to judgment,
to whom the word "carcass" will by no means agree, and but very poorly under
the former consideration: but the people of the Jews are designed by it, in
their fallen, deplorable, miserable, and lifeless state, who were like to the
body of a man, or any other creature, struck dead with lightning from heaven;
being destroyed by the breath of the mouth, and brightness of the coming of
the son of man, like lightning, just as antichrist will be at the last day:

there will the eagles be gathered together:

not particular believers here, or all the saints at the day of judgment;
though these may be, as they are, compared to eagles for many things; as
their swiftness in flying to Christ, their sagacity and the sharpness of
their spiritual sight, soaring on high, and renewing their spiritual strength
and youth: but here the Roman armies are intended, whose ensigns were eagles;
and the eagle still is, to this day, the ensign of the Roman empire: formerly
other creatures, with the eagle, were used for ensigns; but C. Marius, in his
second consulship, banished them, and appropriated the eagle only to the
legions: nor was it a single eagle that was carried before the army, but

every legion had an eagle went before it, made of gold or silver, and carried upon the top of a spear ^{F26}: and the sense of this passage is this, that wherever the Jews were, whether at Jerusalem, where the body and carcass of them was, in a most forlorn and desperate condition; or in any other parts of the country, the Roman eagles, or legions, would find them out, and make an utter destruction of them. The Persic version, contrary to others, and to all copies, renders it "vultures". Though this creature is of the same nature with the eagle, with respect to feeding on carcasses: hence the proverb,

"cujus vulturis hoe erit cadaver?"

"what vulture shall have this carcass?" It has a very sharp sight, and quick smell, and will, by both, discern carcasses at almost incredible distance: it will diligently watch a man that is near death; and will follow armies going to battle, as historians relate ^{F1}: and it is the eagle which is of the vulture kind, as Aristotle ^{F2} observes, that takes up dead bodies, and carries them to its nest. And Pliny ^{F3} says, it is that sort of eagles only which does so; and some have affirmed that eagles will by no means touch dead carcasses: but this is contrary not only to this passage of Scripture, but to others; particularly to (Job 39:30) "her young ones also suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is she": an expression much the same with this in the text, and to which it seems to refer; see also (Proverbs 30:17) .
Though Chrysostom

FOOTNOTES:

F4 says, both the passage in Job, and this in Matthew, are to be understood of vultures; he doubtless means the eagles that are of the vulture kind, the Gypaeetos, or vulture eagle. There is one kind of eagles, naturalists say ^{F5}, will not feed on flesh, which is called the bird of Jupiter; but, in common, the eagle is represented as a very rapacious creature, seizing, and feeding upon the flesh of hares, fawns, geese and the rather this creature is designed here; since, of all birds, this is the only one that is not hurt with lightning ^{F6}, and so can immediately seize carcasses killed thereby; to which there seems to be an allusion here, by comparing it with the preceding verse: however, the Persic version, though it is literally a proper one, yet from the several things observed, it is not to be overlooked and slighted.

F26 Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 10. c. 4. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 4. c. 2.

F1 Aelian. de Animal. Natura, l. 2. c. 46.

F2 De Hist. Animal. l. 9. c. 32.

F3 Hist. Nat l. 10. c. 3.

F4 In Matt. Homil. 49.

F5 Aelian. de Animal. l. 9. c. 10.

F6 Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 2. c. 55.

Matthew 24:29

Immediately after the tribulation of those days

That is, immediately after the distress the Jews would be in through the siege of Jerusalem, and the calamities attending it; just upon the destruction of that city, and the temple in it, with the whole nation of the

Jews, shall the following things come to pass; and therefore cannot be referred to the last judgment, or what should befall the church, or world, a little before that time, or should be accomplished in the whole intermediate time, between the destruction of Jerusalem, and the last judgment: for all that is said to account for such a sense, as that it was usual with the prophets to speak of judgments afar off as near; and that the apostles often speak of the coming of Christ, the last judgment, and the end of the world, as just at hand; and that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, will not answer to the word "immediately", or show that that should be understood of two thousand years after: besides, all the following things were to be fulfilled before that present generation, in which Christ lived, passed away, (Matthew 24:34) and therefore must be understood of things that should directly, and immediately take place upon, or at the destruction of the city and temple. ***Shall the sun be darkened:***

not in a literal but in a figurative sense; and is to be understood not of the religion of the Jewish church; nor of the knowledge of the law among them, and the decrease of it; nor of the Gospel being obscured by heretics and false teachers; nor of the temple of Jerusalem, senses which are given into by one or another; but of the Shekinah, or the divine presence in the temple. The glory of God, who is a sun and a shield, filled the tabernacle, when it was reared up; and so it did the temple, when it was built and dedicated; in the most holy place, Jehovah took up his residence; here was the symbol of his presence, the mercy seat, and the two cherubim over it: and though God had for some time departed from this people, and a voice was heard in the temple before its destruction, saying, "let us go hence"; yet the token of the divine presence remained till the utter destruction of it; and then this sun was wholly darkened, and there was not so much as the outward symbol of it: ***and the moon shall not give her light;***

which also is to be explained in a figurative and metaphorical sense; and refers not to the Roman empire, which quickly began to diminish; nor to the city of Jerusalem; nor to the civil polity of the nation; but to the ceremonial law, the moon, the church is said to have under her feet, (Revelation 12:1) so called because the observance of new moons was one part of it, and the Jewish festivals were regulated by the moon; and especially, because like the moon, it was variable and changeable. Now, though this, in right, was abolished at the death of Christ, and ceased to give any true light, when he, the substance, was come; yet was kept up by the Jews, as long as their temple was standing; but when that was destroyed, the daily sacrifice, in fact, ceased, and so it has ever since; the Jews esteeming it unlawful to offer sacrifice in a strange land, or upon any other altar than that of Jerusalem; and are to this day without a sacrifice, and without an ephod: ***and the stars shall fall from heaven;***

which phrase, as it elsewhere intends the doctors of the church, and preachers falling off from purity of doctrine and conversation; so here it designs the Jewish Rabbins and doctors, who departed from the word of God, and set up their traditions above it, fell into vain and senseless interpretations of it, and into debates about things contained in their Talmud; the foundation of which began to be laid immediately upon their dispersion into other countries: ***and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken;***

meaning all the ordinances of the legal dispensation; which shaking, and even

removing of them, were foretold by (Haggai 2:6) and explained by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 12:26 Hebrews 12:27) whereby room and way were made for Gospel ordinances to take place, and be established; which shall not be shaken, so as to be removed, but remain till the second coming of Christ. The Jews themselves are sensible, and make heavy complaints of the great declensions and alterations among them, since the destruction of the temple; for after having taken notice of the death of several of their doctors, who died a little before, or after that; and that upon their death ceased the honour of the law, the splendour of wisdom, and the glory of the priesthood, they add ^{F7};

“from the time that the temple was destroyed, the wise men, and sons of nobles, were put to shame, and they covered their heads; liberal men were reduced to poverty; and men of violence and calumny prevailed; and there were none that expounded, or inquired, or asked. R. Elezer the great, said, from the time the sanctuary were destroyed, the wise men began to be like Scribes, and the Scribes like to the Chazans, (or sextons that looked after the synagogues,) and the Chazans like to the common people, and the common people grew worse and worse, and there were none that inquired and asked;”

that is, of the wise men there were no scholars, or very few that studied in the law.

FOOTNOTES:

F7 Misn. Sotah, c. 9. sect. 15.

Matthew 24:30

And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven,

&c.] Not the sound of the great trumpet, mentioned in the following verse; nor the clouds of heaven in this; nor the sign of the cross appearing in the air, as it is said to do in the times of Constantine: not the former; for though to blow a trumpet is sometimes to give a sign, and is an alarm; and the feast which the Jews call the day of blowing the trumpets, (Numbers 29:1) is, by the Septuagint, rendered (hmera shmasiav) , “the day of signification”; yet this sign is not said to be sounded, but to appear, or to be seen, which does not agree with the sounding of a trumpet: much less can this design the last trumpet at the day of judgment, since of that the text does not speak; and, for the same reason, the clouds cannot be meant in which Christ will come to judgment, nor are clouds in themselves any sign of it: nor the latter, of which there is no hint in the word of God, nor any reason to expect it, nor any foundation for it; nor is any miraculous star intended, such as appeared at Christ’s first coming, but the son of man himself: just as circumcision is called the sign of circumcision, (Romans 4:11) and Christ is sometimes called a sign, (Luke 2:34) as is his resurrection from the dead, (Matthew 12:39) and here the glory and majesty in which he shall come: and it may be observed, that the other evangelists make no mention of the sign, only speak of the son of man, (Mark 13:26) (Luke 21:27) and he

shall appear, not in person, but in the power of his wrath and vengeance, on the Jewish nation which will be a full sign and proof of his being come: for the sense is, that when the above calamities shall be upon the civil state of that people, and there will be such changes in their ecclesiastical state it will be as clear a point, that Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is also come in his vengeance on that nation, for their rejection and crucifixion him, as if they had seen him appear in person in the heavens. They had been always seeking a sign, and were continually asking one of him; and now they will have a sign with a witness; as they had accordingly. **And then shall the tribes of the earth,**
or land, **mourn;**

that is, the land of Judea; for other lands, and countries, were not usually divided into tribes, as that was; neither were they affected with the calamities and desolations of it, and the vengeance of the son of man upon it; at least not so as to mourn on that account, but rather were glad and rejoiced: **and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.**

The Arabic version reads it, "ye shall see", as is expressed by Christ, in (Matthew 26:64) . Where the high priest, chief priests, Scribes, and elders, and the whole sanhedrim of the Jews are spoken to: and as the same persons, namely, the Jews, are meant here as there; so the same coming of the son of man is intended; not his coming at the last day to judgment; though that will be in the clouds of heaven, and with great power and glory; but his coming to bring on, and give the finishing stroke to the destruction of that people, which was a dark and cloudy dispensation to them: and when they felt the power of his arm, might, if not blind and stupid to the last degree, see the glory of his person, that he was more than a mere man, and no other than the Son of God, whom they had despised, rejected, and crucified; and who came to set up his kingdom and glory in a more visible and peculiar manner, among the Gentiles.

Matthew 24:31

And he shall send his angels

Not the angels, i.e. ministering spirits, so called, not from their nature, but their office, as being sent forth by God and Christ; but men angels, or messengers, the ministers and preachers of the Gospel, whom Christ would call, qualify, and send forth into all the world of the Gentiles, to preach his Gospel, and plant churches there still more, when that at Jerusalem was broken up and dissolved. These are called "angels", because of their mission, and commission from Christ, to preach the Gospel; and because of their knowledge and understanding in spiritual things; and because of their zeal, diligence, and watchfulness. **With a great sound of a trumpet,** meaning the Gospel; see (Isaiah 27:13) so called in allusion either to the silver trumpets which Moses was ordered to make of one piece, and use them for the calling of the assembly, the journeying of the camps, blowing an alarm for war, and on their solemn and festival days, (Numbers 10:1-10) . The Gospel being rich and precious, all of a piece, useful for gathering souls to Christ, and to his churches; to direct saints in their journey to Canaan's land; to encourage them to fight the Lord's battles; and is a joyful sound, being a sound of love, grace, and mercy, peace, pardon, righteousness,

life and salvation, by Christ: or else so called, in allusion to the trumpet blown in the year of "jubilee"; which proclaimed rest to the land, liberty to prisoners, a release of debts, and restoration of inheritances; as the Gospel publishes rest in Christ, liberty to the captives of sin, Satan, and the law, a payment of debts by Christ, and a release from them upon that, and a right and title to the heavenly inheritance. The Vulgate Latin reads it, "with a trumpet, and a great voice"; and so does Munster's Hebrew Gospel; and so it was read in four of Beza's copies: ***and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other;***

that is, by the ministration of the Gospel; the Spirit of God accompanying it with his power, and grace, the ministers of the word should gather out of the world unto Christ, and to his churches, such persons as God had, before the foundation of the world, chosen in Christ, unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; wherever they are under the whole heavens, from one end to another; or in any part of the earth, though at the greatest distance; for in (Mark 13:27) it is said, "from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of the heaven". The Jews ^{F8} say, that

"in the after redemption (i.e. by the Messiah) all Israel shall be gathered together by the sound of a trumpet, from the four parts of the world."

FOOTNOTES:

F8 Zohar in Lev. fol. 47. 1.