

Saint\_Thomas\_Explains\_the\_Gospel\_for\_the\_24<sup>th</sup>\_Sunday\_after\_Pentecost.

*When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: he that readeth let him understand. Then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains: And he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take any thing out of his house: And he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat. And woe to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath. For there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be. And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. Behold I have told it to you, beforehand. If therefore they shall say to you: Behold he is in the desert, go ye not out: Behold he is in the closets, believe it not. For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west: so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together. And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet, and a great voice: and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them. And from the fig tree learn a parable: When the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh, even at the doors. Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass.*

CHRYS. As above He had obscurely intimated the end of Jerusalem; He now proceeds to a more plain announcement of it, citing a prophecy which should make them believe it.

JEROME; That, Let him that reads understand, is said to call us to the mystic understanding of the place. What we read in Daniel is this; And in the midst of the week the sacrifice and the oblation shall be taken away, and in the temple shall be the abomination of desolations until the consummation of the time, and consummation shall be given upon the desolate.

AUG. Luke, in order to show that the abomination of desolation foretold by Daniel had reference to the time of the siege of Jerusalem, repeats these words of our Lord, When you shall see Jerusalem encompassed by armies, then know you that its desolation draws near.

PSEUDO-CHRYS. Whence I think that by the abomination of desolation, He means the army by which the city of the holy Jerusalem was desolated.

JEROME; Or it may be understood of the statue of Caesar, which Pilate set up in the temple; or of the equestrian statue of Adrian, which stood to the present time in the very Holy of Holies. For, according to the Old Scripture, an idol is called 'abomination;' of desolation is added, because the idol was set up in the desolated and deserted temple.

CHRYS. Or because he who desolated the city and the temple placed his statue there. He says, When you shall see, because these things were to happen while some of them were yet alive. Wherein admire Christ's power, and the courage of the disciples' who preached through those times in which all things Jewish were the object of attack. The Apostles, being Jews, introduced new laws in opposition to the Roman authority. The Romans conquered countless thousands of Jews, but could not overcome twelve unarmed unprotected men. But because it had often happened to the Jews to be recovered in very desperate circumstances, as in the times of Sennacherib and Antiochus, that no man might look for any such event now, He gave command to His disciples to fly, saying, Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains.

REMIG. And this we know was so done when the fall of Jerusalem drew near; for on the approach of the Roman army, all the Christians in the province, warned, as ecclesiastical history tells us, miraculously from heaven, withdrew, and passing the Jordan, took refuge in the city of Pella; and under the protection of that King Agrippa, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles, they continued some time; but Agrippa himself, with the Jews whom he governed, was subjected to the dominion of the Romans.

CHRYS. Then to show how inevitable the evils that should come upon the Jews, and how infinite their calamity, He adds, And let him which is on the housetop, not come down to take any thing out of his house, for it was better to be saved, and to lose his clothes, than to put on a garment and perish; and of him who is in the field He says the same. For if those who are in the city fly from it, little need is there for those who are abroad to return to the city. But it is easy to despise money, and not hard to provide other raiment; but how can one avoid natural circumstances? How can a woman with child be made active for flight, or how can she that gives suck desert the child she has brought forth? Woe, therefore, to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days; to the one, because they are encumbered, and cannot easily fly, bearing about the burden of the womb; to the other, because they are held by compassion for their children, and cannot save with them those whom they are suckling.

ORIGEN; Or because that will not be a time of showing pity, neither upon them who are with child, nor upon them who are suckling, nor upon their infants. And as speaking to Jews who thought they might travel no more upon the sabbath than a sabbath-day's journey, He adds, But pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath.

JEROME; Because in the one the severity of the cold prevents your flight to the deserts, and your lurking in mountains and wilds; in the other, you must either transgress the Law, if you will fly, or encounter instant death if you will stay.

CHRYS. Note how this speech is directed against the Jews; for when these things were done by Vespasian, the Apostles could neither observe the Sabbath nor fly, seeing most of them were already dead, and those who survived were living in distant countries. And why they should pray for this He adds a reason, For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor shall be.

AUG. In Luke it is thus read, There shall be great distress upon the earth, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations. And so Josephus, who wrote the Jewish History, relates evils so great happening to this people as to seem hardly credible. Whence it was not unreasonably said, that such tribulation had never been from the beginning of creation, nor should be; for though in the time of Antichrist shall be such, or perhaps greater; yet to the Jews, of whom we must understand this, such shall never more befall. For if they shall be the first and the chief to receive Antichrist, they will then rather inflict than suffer tribulation.

CHRYS. I ask the Jews, whence came upon them so grievous wrath from heaven more woeful than all that had come upon them before? Plainly it was because of the desperate crime and the denial of the Cross. But He shows that they deserved still heavier punishment than they received, when He adds, And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; that is, If the siege by the Romans should be continued longer, all the Jews would perish; for by all flesh, He means all the Jewish nation, those within and those without; for the Romans were at war not only with those in Judea, but with the whole race wherever dispersed.

AUG. Indeed some persons seem to me not unfitly to understand by these days the evils themselves, as in other places of divine Scripture evil days are spoken of; not that the days themselves are evil, but the things that are done on them. And they are said to be shortened, because they are less felt, God giving us endurance; so that even though grievous, they are felt as short.

CHRYS. But that the Jews should not say that these evils came because of the preaching and the disciples of Christ, He shows them that had it not been for His disciples, they would have totally perished, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

AUG. For we ought not to doubt that when Jerusalem was overthrown, there were among that people elect of God who had believed out of the circumcision, or would have believed, elect before the foundation of the world, for whose sake those days should be shortened, and their evils made endurable. Some there are who suppose that the days will be shortened by a more rapid motion of the sun, as the day was made longer on the prayer of Jesus Naue.

JEROME; Not remembering that which is written. The day continues according to your ordinances. We must understand it of their being shortened not in measure, but in number, lest the faith of believers should be shaken by lengthened affliction.

AUG. For let us not suppose that the computation of Daniel's weeks was interfered with by this shortening of those days, or that they were not already at that time complete, but

had to be completed afterwards in the end of all things, for Luke most plainly testifies that the prophecy of Daniel was accomplished at the time when Jerusalem was overthrown.

CHRYS. Observe this economy of the Holy Spirit in this, that John wrote nothing of all this, that he might not seem to be writing a history after the event; for he survived sometime the taking of Jerusalem. But these who died before it, and saw nothing of it, these write it, that the power of prophecy may shine manifestly forth.

HILARY; Or otherwise; It is a sign of His future coming that the Lord gives, when He says, When you shall see the abomination. For the Prophet spoke this of the times of Antichrist; and he calls abomination that which coming against God claims to itself the honor of God. It is the abomination of desolation, because it will desolate the earth with wars and slaughter; and it is admitted by the Jews, and set up in the holy place, that where God had been invoked by the prayers of the saints, into that same place admitted by the unbelievers it might be adored with the worship of God. And because this error will be peculiar to the Jews, that having rejected the truth they should adopt a lie, He warns them to leave Judea, and flee to the mountains, that no pollution or infection might be gathered by admixture with a people who should believe on Antichrist.

That He says, Let him, which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house, is thus understood. The roof is the highest part of the house, the summit and perfection of the whole building. He then who stands on the top of his house, i.e. in the perfection of his heart, aloft in the regeneration of a new spirit, ought not to come down to the lower desire of things of the world. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his coat, i.e. He that has attained to obedience to the command, let him not return back to his former cares, to take on him again the coat of his former sins in which he once was clothed.

AUG. For in tribulations we must beware of coming down from the spiritual heights, and yielding ourselves to the carnal life; or of failing and looking behind us, after having made some progress forwards.

HILARY; That which is said, Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck, is not to be taken literally as an admonition to women pregnant, but as a description of souls burdened with the weight of sin that neither in the house, nor in the field, may escape the storm of the wrath that is in store for them. Woe also to those that are being suckled; the weak souls, that is, who are being brought to the knowledge of God as by milk, to whom it shall be woe, because they are too laden to fly, and too inexperienced to resist Antichrist, having neither escaped sin, nor partaken of the food of true bread.

PSEUDO-AUG. Or, They that are with child, are they who covet what belongs to others; they that give suck, are they who have already forcibly taken that which they coveted; to them shall be woe in the day of judgment. Pray you that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath day; that is,

AUG. That no one be found in that day in either joy or sorrow for temporal things.

HILARY; Or; That we be not taken in the frost of sins, or in discontinuance of good works, because of the soreness of the affliction; notwithstanding that for the sake of God's

elect, those days shall be shortened, that the abridgment of the time may disarm the force of the calamities.

ORIGEN; Mystically; In the holy place of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testament, Antichrist, that is, false word, has often stood; let those who see this flee from the Judea of the letter to the high mountains of truth. And whoever has been found to have gone up to the house-top of the word, and to be standing upon its summit, let him not come down thence as though he would fetch any thing out of his house. And if he be in the field in which the treasure is hid, and return thence to his house, he will run into the temptation of a false word; but especially if he have stripped off his old garment, that is, the old man, and should have returned again to take it up.

Then the soul, as it were with child by the word, not having yet brought forth, is liable to a woe; for it casts that which it had conceived, and loses that hope which is in the acts of truth; and the same also if the word has been brought forth perfect and entire, but not having yet attained sufficient growth. Let them that flee to the mountains pray that their flight be not in the winter or on the sabbath-day, because in the serenity of a settled spirit they may reach the way of salvation, but if the winter overtake them they fall amongst those whom they would fly from and there be some who rest from evil works, but do not good works; be your flight then not on such sabbath when a man rests from good works, for no man is easily overcome in times of peril from false doctrines, except he is not provided with good works. But what sorer affliction is there than to see our brethren deceived, and to feel one's self shaken and terrified? Those days mean the precepts and dogmas of truth; and all interpretations coming of science falsely so called are so many additions to those days, which God shortens by those whom He wills.

CHRYS. When the Lord had finished all that related to Jerusalem, He came in the rest to His own coming, and gives them signs thereof, useful not for them only, but for us and for all who shall be after us. As above, the Evangelist said, In those days came John the Baptist, not implying immediately after what had gone before, but thirty years after; so here, when He says Then, He passes over the whole interval of time between the taking of Jerusalem and the beginnings of the consummation of the world. Among the signs which He gives of His second coming He certifies them concerning the place, and the deceivers. For it shall not be then as at His former coming, when He appeared in Bethlehem, in a corner of the world, unknown of any; but He shall come openly so as not to need any to announce His approach, wherefore, If any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe not.

JEROME; Wherein He shows that His second coming shall be not in lowliness as His first, but in glory; and therefore it is folly to seek in places little and obscure for Him who is the Light of the whole world.

HILARY; Notwithstanding, by reason of the great tribulation in which men shall be cast, false prophets promising to show aid present from Christ, will falsely affirm that Christ is present in divers places, that they may draw into the service of Antichrist men discouraged and distracted.

CHRYS. He speaks here of Antichrist, and of certain his ministers, whom He calls false Christs and false prophets, such as were many in the time of the Apostles; but before Christ's second coming there shall come others more bitter than the former, And they shall show great signs and wonders.

AUG. Here the, Lord forewarns us that even wicked men shall do some miracles which the saints cannot do, yet are they not therefore to be thought to have a higher place in the sight of God. For the Egyptian magi were not more acceptable to God than the people of Israel, because they could do what the Israelites could not; yet did Moses, by the power of God, work greater things. This gift is not bestowed on all the saints, lest the weak should be led astray by a most destructive error, supposing such powers to be higher gifts than those works of righteousness by which eternal life is secured.

And though magi do the same miracles that the saints do, yet are they done with a different end, and through a different authority; for the one do them seeking the glory of God, the others seeking their own glory; these do them by some special compact or privilege granted to the Powers, within their sphere, those by the public dispensation and the command of Him to whom all creation is subject.

For it is one thing for the owner of a horse to be compelled to give it up to a soldier, another for him to hand it over to a purchaser, or to give or lend it to a friend; and as those evil soldiers, who are condemned by the imperial discipline, employ the imperial ensigns to terrify the owners of any property, and to extort from them what is not required by the public service, so some evil Christians, by means of the name of Christ, or by words or sacraments Christian, compel somewhat from the Powers; yet these, when thus at the bidding of evil men, they depart from their purpose, they depart in order to deceive men in whose wanderings they rejoice. It is one way then in which magi, another in which good Christians, another in which bad Christians, work miracles; the magi by a private compact, good Christians by the public righteousness, evil Christians by the signs of public righteousness. And we ought not to wonder at this when we believe not unreasonably that all that we see happen is wrought by the agency of the inferior powers of this air.

AUG. Yet are we not therefore to think that this visible material world attends the nod of the disobedient angels, but rather the power is given them of God. Nor are we to suppose that such evil angels have creative power, but by their spirituality they know the seeds of things which are hidden from us, and these they secretly scatter by suitable adaptations of the elements, and so they give occasion both to the whole being, and the more rapid increase of substances. For so there are many men who know what sort of creatures use to be generated out of certain herbs, meats, juices and humors, bruised and mingled together in a certain fashion; save only that it is harder for men to do these things, inasmuch as they lack that subtlety of sense, and penetrativeness of body in their limbs dull and of earthly mold.

GREG. When then Antichrist shall have wrought wonderful prodigies before the eyes of the carnal, he shall draw men after him, all such as delight in present goods, surrendering

themselves irrevocably to his sway, Insomuch that if it were possible the very elect should be led astray.

ORIG. That, If it were possible, is spoken hyperbolically; not that the elect can be led astray, but He wishes to show that the discourse of heretics is often so persuasive, as to have force to prevail even with those who act wisely.

GREG. Or, because the heart of the elect is assailed with fearful thoughts, yet their faithfulness is not shaken, the Lord comprehends both under the same sentence, for to waver in thought is to err. He adds, If it were possible, because it is not possible that the elect should be taken in error.

RABAN. He says not this because it is possible for the divine election to be defeated, but because they, who to men's judgment seemed elect, shall be led into error.

GREG. And as darts, when foreseen, are less likely to hit, He adds, Lo, I have told you. Our Lord announces the woes which are to precede the destruction of the world, that when they come they may alarm the less from having been foreknown.

HILARY; The false prophets, of whom He had spoken above, shall say of Christ one while, Lo, He is in the desert, in order that they may cause men to wander astray; another while, Lo, He is in the secret chambers, that they may enthrall men under the dominion of Antichrist.

But the Lord declares Himself to be neither lurking in a remote corner, nor shut up to be visited singly, but that He shall be exhibited to the view of all, and in every place, As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

CHRYS. As He had above described in what guise Antichrist should come, so here He describes how He Himself shall come. For as the lightning needs none to herald or announce it, but is in an instant of time visible throughout the whole world, even to those that are silting in their chambers, so the coming of Christ shall be seen every where at once, because of the brightness of His glory. Another sign He adds of His coming, Wherever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together. The eagles denote the company of the Angels, Martyrs, and Saints.

JEROME; By an instance from nature, which we daily see, we are instructed in a sacrament of Christ. Eagles and vultures are said to scent dead bodies even beyond sea, and to flock; to feed upon them. If then birds, not having the gift of reason, by instinct alone find out where lays a dead body, separated by so great space of country, how much more ought the whole multitude of believers to hasten to Christ, whose lightning goes forth out of the east, and shines even to the west? We may understand by the carcass here, or corpse, which in the Latin is more expressively 'cadaver,' an allusion to the passion of Christ's death.

HILARY; That we might not be ignorant of the place in which He should come, He adds this, Wherever the carcass, &c. He calls the Saints eagles, from the spiritual flight of their bodies, and shows that their gathering shall be to the place of His passion, the Angels

guiding them thither; and rightly should we look for His coming in glory there, where He wrought for us eternal glory by the suffering of His bodily humiliation.

ORIGEN; And observe, He says not vultures or crows, but eagles, showing the lordliness and royalty of all who have believed in the Lord's passion.

JEROME; They are called eagles whose youth is rescued as the eagle's, and who take to themselves wings that they may come to Christ's passion.

GREG. We may understand this, Wherever the carcass is, as meaning, I who incarnate sit on the throne of heaven, as soon as I shall have loosed the souls of the elect from the flesh, will exalt them to heavenly places.

JEROME; Or otherwise This may be understood of the false prophets. At the time of the Jewish captivity, there were many leaders who declared themselves to be Christs, so that while the Romans were actually besieging them, there were three factions within. But it is better taken as we expounded it above, of the end of the world. Thirdly, it may be understood of the warfare of the heretics against the Church, and of those Antichrists, who under pretext of false science, fight against Christ.

ORIGEN; The genus of Antichrist is one, the species many, just as all lies are of one sort. As all the holy Prophets were Prophets of the true Christ, so understand that each false Christ shall have his own false Prophets, who shall preach as true the false teachings of some Antichrist. When then one shall say, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there, we need not look abroad out of the Scriptures, for out of the Law, the Prophets, and the Apostles, they bring the things which seem to favor their lie. Or by this, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there, they show that it was not Christ, but some impostor under the same title, such for example as Marcion, or Valentinus, or Basilides taught.

JEROME; If then any one assert to you that Christ tarries in the desert of the Gentiles, or in the teaching of the Philosophers, or in the secret chambers of the heretics, who promise the hidden things of God, believe Him not, but believe that the Catholic Faith shines from east to west in the Churches.

AUG. By the east and west, He signifies the whole world, throughout which the Church should be. In the same way as He said below, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, so now He likens His coming to lightning, which uses to flash out of the clouds. When then the authority of the Church is set up clear and manifest throughout the whole world, He suitably warns His disciples that they should not believe schismatics and heretics. Each schism and heresy holds its own place, either occupying some important position in the earth, or ensnaring men's curiosity in obscure and remote conventicles. Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there, refers to some district or province of the earth; the secret chambers, or the desert, signify the obscure and lurking conventicles of heretics.

JEROME; Or by this, in the desert, or in the secret chambers, He means that in times of persecution and distress, the false Prophets always find place for deceiving.

ORIGEN; Or, when they allege secret and before unpublished Scriptures, in proof of their lie, they seem to say, Lo, the word of truth is in the desert. But when they produce canonical Scripture in which all Christians agree, they seem to say, Lo, the word of truth is

in the chambers. Or wishing to point out such discourses as are altogether without Scripture, He said, If they shall say to you, Lo, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. Truth is like the lightning that comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west. Or this may mean, that truth can be supported out of every passage of Scripture. The lightning of truth comes out of the east, that is, from the first beginnings of Christ, and shines throughout even to His passion, which is His setting; or from the very beginning of creation, to the last Scripture of the Apostles. Or, the east is the Law, the west is the end of the Law, and of John's prophecy. The Church alone neither takes away word or meaning from this lightning, nor adds anything to its prophecy. Or He means that we should give no heed to those who say, Lo, here is Christ, but show Him not in the Church, in which alone is the coming or the Son of Man, who said, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

JEROME; We are invited to flock to Christ's passion wherever in Scripture it is read of, that through it we may be able to come to God's word.

GLOSS. As soon as the Lord has fortified the believers against the arts of Antichrist and his ministers, by showing that His coming would be public, He proceeds to show the order and method of His coming.

CHRYS. By the tribulation, He means the times of Antichrist and the false Prophets; for when there are so many deceivers, the tribulation will be great. But it shall not extend through any great length of time. For if for the elect's sake the Jewish war is shortened, much more shall this tribulation be shortened for their sakes; for which reason He said not After, but Immediately after, for He shall come immediately after.

HILARY; The darkening of the sun, the failing of the moon, and the fall of the stars, indicate the glories of His coming.

ORIGEN; One will say, As at the breaking out of great conflagrations, great darkness is at the first caused by the smoke, so when the world shall be consumed by fire, which shall be kindled, even the great luminaries shall be darkened; and when the light of the stars is decayed, the rest of their substance, incapable of exaltation, shall fall from heaven into what it was, when it was first raised aloft by the light. When this shall have taken place, it follows that the rational heavenly powers shall suffer dismay and derangement, and shall be suspended from their functions. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, that sign by which the heavenly things were made, that is, the power which the Son wrought when He hung upon the cross. And the sign shall appear in heaven, that men of all tribes who before had not believed Christianity when preached, then by that sign, acknowledging it as made plain, shall grieve and mourn for their ignorance and sins. Others will think otherwise, that as the light of a lamp dies away by degrees, so when the supply of the heavenly luminaries shall fail, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon and the light of the stars shall grow dim, and that which in their composition is earthy shall fall from heaven. But how can it be said of the sun that its light shall be darkened, when Esaias the Prophet declares, that in the end of the world, there shall be light proceeding forth from the sun? And of the moon he declares that it shall be as the sun. But concerning the stars,

there are some that endeavor to convince us that all, or many of them, are larger than the whole earth. How then shall they fall from heaven, when this earth would not be large enough to contain them?

JEROME; These things, therefore, shall not come to pass by any diminution of light, for in another place we read that the light of the sun shall be sevenfold; but by comparison with real light, all things shall seem dim.

RABAN. But nothing hinders our supposing that the sun and moon with the other stars shall for a time lose their light, as we know the sun did at the time of the Lord's passion; as Joel also says, The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and manifest day of the Lord come. But when the day of judgment is passed, and the life of future glory shall dawn, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, then shall that come to pass of which Isaiah speaks, The light of the moon shall be as the light of the site, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold. The stars shall fall from heaven, is expressed in Mark; There shall be stars falling from heaven, that is, lacking their proper light.

JEROME; By the powers of heaven, we understand the bands of the Angels.

CHRYS. Very fitly shall they be shaken and dismayed, seeing so mighty a change being wrought, their fellow-servants punished, and the universe standing before a terrible tribunal.

ORIGEN; But as, at the dispensation of the Cross, the sun was eclipsed, and darkness was spread over the earth; so when the sign of the Son of Man appears in heaven, the light of the sun, moon, and stars, shall fail, as though waning before the might of that sign. This we understand to be the sign of the cross, that the Jews may see, as Zacharias and John speak, Him whom they have pierced, and the sign of victory .

CHRYS. But because the sun will be darkened, the cross would not be seen, if it were not far brighter than the rays of the sun. That the disciples might not be ashamed, and grieve over the cross, He speaks of it as a sign, with a kind of distinction. The sign of the cross will appear to overthrow the shamelessness of the Jews, when Christ shall appear in the judgment, showing not only His wounds, but His most ignominious death, And then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn. For when they shall see the cross, they shall bethink them how they have gained nothing by His death, and that they have crucified Him whom they ought to have worshipped.

JEROME; Rightly does He say, the tribes of the earth, for they shall mourn who have no citizenship in heaven, but are written in earth.

ORIGEN; Morally, one may say that the sun, which shall be darkened, is the Devil, who shall be convicted in the end of the world, that whereas he is darkness, he has feigned himself to be the sun; the moon, which seems to receive its light from this sun, is the Church of the wicked, which professes to have and to give light, but then convicted with its sinful dogmas, shall lose its brightness; and all those who, either by false teaching, or false virtues, promised truth to men, but led them astray by lies, these are fitly called stars falling from, so to say, their own heaven, where they were raised on high, exalting

themselves against the knowledge of God. For illustration of this discourse, we may apply that place in Proverbs, which says, The light of the just is unquenchable but the light of the wicked shall be quenched. Then the brightness of God shall appear in every one who has borne the image of the heavenly; and they of heaven shall rejoice, but they of earth shall lament.

AUG. Or, the Church is the sun, moon, and stars, to which it is said, Fair as the moon, bright as the sun. Then shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, because in that ungoverned fury of wicked persecutors, the Church shall not be seen. Then shall the stars fade from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken, because many, who seemed to be shining in God's grace, shall give way to their persecutors, and shall fall, and even the stoutest believers shall be shaken. And these things shall be after the tribulation of those days, not because they shall happen when the whole persecution is overpass, but because the tribulation shall be first, that the falling away may come after. And because it shall be so throughout all those days, it shall be after the tribulation of those days, yet on those very days.

CHRYS. He adds this, that having heard of the cross, they should not now imagine a similar degradation.

AUG. The first and most apparent meaning of this is of that time when; He shall come to judge the quick and the dead in His body - that body in which He sits at the right hand of the Father, in which He died and rose again and ascended into heaven. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles; He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, upon which it was said by the Angels, He shall so come as you have seen Him go into heaven, we may reasonably believe that He Will come again, not only in the same body, but also in a cloud.

ORIGEN; Therefore shall they see with the bodily eyes the Son of Man, coming in human shape, in the clouds of heaven, that is, on high. As at the transfiguration, a voice came out of the cloud, so when He shall come again transformed into His glorious appearance, it shall be not on one cloud, but upon many, which shall be His charms. And if when the Son of God went up to Jerusalem, they who loved Him spread their garments in the way, not willing that even the ass that carried Him should tread upon the earth; what wonder, if the Father and God of all should spread the clouds of heaven under the body of the Son, when He comes to the work of the consummation? And one may say, that as in the creation of man, God took clay from the earth and made man; so to manifest the glory of Christ, the Lord taking of the heaven, and of its substance, gave it a body of a bright cloud in the Transfiguration, and of bright clouds at the Consummation; wherefore it is here said, in the clouds of heaven, as it was there said, of the clay of the ground. And it is fitting that the Father to give all such admirable gifts to the Son, because He humbled Himself; and He has also exalted Him, not only spiritually, but bodily, that He should come upon such clouds; and perhaps upon rational clouds, that even the chariot of the glorified Son of Man should not be irrational. At the first, Jesus came with that power with which He wrought signs and wonders in the people; yet was that power little in

comparison of that great power with which He shall come in the end; for that was the power of one emptying Himself of power. And also, it is fitting that He should be transformed into greater glory than at the transfiguration on the mount; for then He was transfigured for the sake of three only, but in the consummation of the whole world, He shall appear in great glory, that all may see Him in glory.

AUG. But because the Scriptures are to be searched, and we are not to content ourselves with the surface of them, let us look closely at what follows, When you see all these things come to pass, know that he is near even at the door. We know then that He is near, when we see come to pass not any of the foregoing things, but all of them, among which is this that the Son of Man shall be seen coming. And he shall send his Angels, who from the four quarters of the world shall gather together His elect. All these things He does at the last hour coming in His members as in the clouds, or in the whole Church as in one great cloud, as now He ceases not to come. And with great power and glory, because His power and glory will seem greater in the Saints to whom He will give great power, that they may not be overcome of persecution.

ORIGEN; Or He comes every day with great power to the mind of the believer in the clouds of prophecy, that is, in the Scriptures of the Prophets and the Apostles, who utter the word of God with a meaning above human nature. Also we say that to those who understand He comes with great glory, and that this is the mole seen in the second coming of the Word which is to the perfect. And so it may be, that all which the three Evangelists have said concerning Christ's coming, if carefully compared together and thoroughly examined would be found to apply to His continual daily coming in His body, which is the Church, of which coming He said in another place, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven, excepting those places in which He promises that His last coming in His own person.

ORIGEN; Because He had spoken of mourning, which shall be only that they may bear witness against themselves and condemn themselves, that at none should suppose that that mourning will end their woes, He now adds, And he shall send his Angels with a trumpet and a loud voice.

REMIG. Here we are not to think of a real trumpet, but of the voice of the archangel, which shall be so loud that at its sound all the dead shall rise out of the crust of the earth.

CHRYS. The sound of the trump refers to the resurrection, and the rejoicing, and to represent the astonishment which shall be then, and the woe of those that shall be left, and shall not be snatched up into the clouds.

ORIGEN; It is written in Numbers, that the Priests shall summon by the sound of the trumpet from the four winds those who are of the camp of Israel, and it is in allusion to this that Christ speaks here of the Angels, And they shall gather together the elect from the four winds.

REMIG. That is, from the four quarters of the world, north, south, east, and west.

ORIGEN; Some of little discernment think, that only those who shall then be found in the body shall be gathered together, but it is better to say that the Angels of Christ shall

then gather together not only all who from the coming of Christ to the end of the world have been called and chosen, but all from the foundation of the world, who like Abraham have seen the day of Christ and rejoiced therein. And that He here means not only those that shall be found in the body, but those also who have quitted the body, the following words show, from one end of heaven to the other, which cannot be meant of any one upon earth. Or, the heavens are the divine Scriptures and their authors in which God dwells. One end of heaven is the beginning of the Scriptures, the other end is their conclusion. The saints there are gathered together from one end of heaven, that is, from those that live in the beginning of the Scriptures to those who live in the ends of them. They shall be gathered together with a trumpet and a loud voice, that they who hear and attend may prepare themselves for that way of perfection which leads to the Son of God.

REMIG. Or otherwise; Lest any one should suppose that they should be gathered only from the four quarters of the world, and not from the middle regions, He adds this, And from one end of heaven to the other. By the heights of heaven meaning the central regions of the earth, which are under the heights of heaven; and by the ends of heaven, meaning the extreme parts of the earth, where the land seems to join a very wide and distant horizon.

CHRYS. That the Lord calls His elect by His Angels pertains to the honor of the elect; and Paul also says that they shall be caught into the clouds; that is, the Angels shall gather together those that have risen, and when they are gathered together, the clouds shall receive them.

CHRYS. Because He had said that these things should come to pass immediately after the tribulation of those days, they might ask, How long time hence? He therefore gives them an instance in the fig.

JEROME; As much as to say, When the tender shoots first show themselves in the stem of the fig tree, and the bud bursts into flower, and the bark puts forth leaves, you perceive the approach of summer and the season of spring and growth; so when you shall see all these things that are written, do not suppose that the end of the world is immediate, but that certain monitory signs and precursors are showing its approach.

CHRYS. He shows that the interval of time shall not be great, but that the coming of Christ will be presently. By the comparison of the tree He signifies the spiritual summer and peace that the just shall enjoy after their winter, while sinners on the other hand shall have a winter after summer.

ORIGEN; As the fig has its vital powers torpid within it through the season of winter, but when that is past its branches become tender by those very powers and put forth leaves; so the world and all those who are saved had before Christ's coming their vital energies dormant within them as in a season of winter. Christ's Spirit breathing upon them makes the branches of their hearts soft and tender, and that which was dormant within burgeons into leaf, and makes show of fruit. To such the summer and the coming of the glory of the Word of God is nigh at hand.

CHRYS. This analogy also adds credit to His foregoing discourse; for wherever He speaks of what must by all means come to pass, Christ ever brings forward parallel physical laws.

AUG. That now from the Evangelic and Prophetic signs that we see come to pass, we ought to look that the Lord's coming should be nigh, who is there that denies? For daily it draws ever more and more near, but of the exact time it is said, It is not for you to know the times, or the seasons. See how long ago the Apostle said, Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. What he spoke was not false, and yet how many years have elapsed, how much more may we not say that the Lord's coming is at hand now, that so great an accession of time has been made?

HILARY; Mystically; The Synagogue is likened to the fig tree; its branch is Antichrist, the son of the Devil, the portion of sin, the maintainer of the law; when this shall begin to swell and to put forth leaves, then summer is nigh, i.e. the approach of the day of judgment shall be perceived.

REMIG. Or, when this fig shall again bud, that is, when the synagogue shall receive the word of holy preaching, as the preaching of Enoch and Elias, then we ought to understand that the day of the consummation is at hand.

AUG. Or, by the fig tree understand the human race, by reason of the temptations of the flesh. When its branch is tender i.e. when the sons of men through faith in Christ have progressed towards spiritual fruits, and the honor of their adoption to be the sons of God has shone forth in them.

HILARY; To give sure credit to the things which should come to pass He adds, Verily I say to you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled. By saying Verily, He gives asseveration to the truth.

ORIGEN; The uninstructed refer the words to the destruction of Jerusalem, and suppose them to have been said of that generation which saw Christ's death, that it should not pass away before the city should be destroyed. But I doubt that they would succeed in thus expounding every word from that, one stone shall not be left upon another, to that, it is even at the door; in some perhaps they would succeed, in others not altogether.

CHRYS. All these things therefore mean what was said of the end of Jerusalem, of the false prophets, and the false Christs, and all the rest which shall happen down to the time of Christ's coming. That He said, This generation, He meant not of the men then living, but of the generation of the faithful; for so Scripture uses to speak of generations, not of time only, but of place, life, and conversation; as it is said, This is the generation of them that seek the Lord. Herein He teaches that Jerusalem shall perish, and the greater part of the Jews be destroyed, but that no trial shall overthrow the generation of the faithful.

ORIGEN; Yet shall the generation of the Church survive the whole of this world, that it may inherit the world to come, yet it shall not pass away until all these things have come to pass. But when all these shall have been fulfilled, then not the earth only but the heavens also shall pass away; that is, not only the men whose life is earthy, and who are therefore called the earth, but also they whose conversation is in heaven, and who are

therefore called the heaven; these shall pass away to things to come, that they may come to better things. But the words spoken by the Savior shall not pass away, because they effect and shall ever effect their purpose; but the perfect and they that admit no further improvement, passing through what they are, come to that which they are not; and this is that, My words shall not pass away. And perhaps the words of Moses and the Prophets have passed away, because all that they prophesied has been fulfilled; but the words of Christ are always complete, daily fulfilling and to be fulfilled in the saints. Or perhaps we ought not to say that the words of Moses and the Prophets are once for all fulfilled; seeing they also are the words of the Son of God, and are fulfilled continually.

JEROME; Or, by generation here He means the whole human race, and the Jews in particular. And He adds, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away, to confirm their faith in what has gone before; as though He had said, it is easier to destroy things solid and immovable, than that aught should fail of my words.

HILARY; For heaven and earth have in their constitution no necessity of existence, but Christ's words derived from eternity have in them such virtue that they must needs abide.

JEROME; The heaven and the earth shall pass away by a change, not by annihilation; for how should the sun be darkened, and the moon not give her light, if earth and heaven in which these are should be no more?

RABAN. The heaven which shall pass away is not the starry but the atmospheric heaven which of old was destroyed by the deluge.

CHRYS. He brings forward the elements of the earth to show that the Church is of more value than either heaven or earth, and that He is Maker of all things.

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