

THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH

There are many matters that trouble the United States, but perhaps the two greatest are child sacrifice (which is euphemistically called, 'abortion') and sodomy (which is euphemistically called, 'homosexuality'). Each of these evils is sufficient to bring God's judgment upon a nation. In the United States, murder is illegal, but the state has sophistically distinguished between abortion and murder. Traditionally, Christian civil magistrates, recognizing sodomy as a great evil that draws God's judgment, have declared homosexual acts to be criminal. Before 1962, sodomy was a crime in all fifty of the United States. Today, however, it is protected. It now appears that Joe Biden will replace Donald Trump as president of the United States of America. Biden, in his book, *Promises to Keep*, published thirteen years ago, said that he is "personally opposed to abortion," but that he does not have the "right to impose his view on the rest of society." He has promised that, as president, he will rescind the Mexico City policy, according to which the United States federal government may not give money to non-governmental agencies that perform abortions, or advocate them. Last year, a parish priest, following the counsel of the bishop of South Carolina, refused Biden communion because of his political policies on abortion. Biden also affirms homosexuality and homosexual marriage, so-called, among other sexual perversions. Donald Trump, for his part, is personally opposed to abortion, and as president he has done what he can to stop it. Three days after he was sworn into the office of president, he re-instituted the Mexico City Policy, which Barak Obama had rescinded. Trump, however, like Biden, not only affirms homosexuality and homosexual marriage; he applauds them. Last year, he issued a statement in which he celebrated so-called LGBT Pride Month, and boasted, "My Administration has launched a global campaign to decriminalize homosexuality and invites all nations to join us in this effort!" Biden and Trump are not the cause of our nation's ills; neither are they the remedies. Rather, they are symptoms of them. John Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, wrote, "... they who rule unjustly and incompetently have been raised up by him to punish the wickedness of the people... a wicked king is the Lord's wrath upon the earth." (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.25.20) Whether or not God will judge the United States for their evils, no one can tell. Perhaps God will judge them, as He judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Perhaps He will spare them on account of the number of righteous people in them, as He promised Abraham concerning those wicked cities. Perhaps they will repent, and God will spare them, as he spared the city of Nineveh. In any case, Christ will one day judge all men, and it is the duty of the Christian, in the meantime, to be faithful to Him.

Some months before Jesus's Passion, the scribes and Pharisees approached Jesus, and asked Him why His disciples did not wash their hands before eating according to the traditions of the elders. Jesus answered that many of the traditions of the elders were contrary to the Scriptures, and He cited Isaiah the prophet through whom God said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8, 9) Shortly after, the Pharisees, together with the Sadducees, approached Jesus again, and demanded that He give them a sign proving His claim to be Son of God. Jesus replied that their inability to know the signs of the times was a moral failure on their part. Before departing from them, he told them that a wicked generation seeks after a sign, and none would be given to that generation except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (Matthew 16:1-4) Just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, so Jesus would be three days in the belly of the earth. Jesus warned His disciples against the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. When Jesus asked His disciples who He is, Saint Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Then, for the first time, Jesus told His disciples that the religious leaders in Jerusalem would have Him killed. The Scriptures say, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he

must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” (Matthew 16:21) He told His disciples that, if any man would be His disciple, then he must give up his life. If a man will give his life to Jesus, then Jesus will give life to him; if he will not give his life to Jesus, then Jesus will take away his life. Jesus asked them, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Jesus Himself would give His life for the sake of His Father in heaven, and His Father would indeed give Him the world. Then Jesus said, “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” (Matthew 16:28) Some of Jesus’s disciples would live to see Him become king of the world.

The scribes and Pharisees demanded that Jesus give them a sign, but Jesus had shown them many signs proving Him to be the Christ, the Son of God. Many in Israel believed in Him. Many of the religious leaders, however, did not believe in Him, and rather sought to kill Him, and many in the city of Jerusalem followed those leaders. Jesus, in the week of His Passion, entered the temple in Jerusalem, and with eight ‘woes’ denounced to the scribes and Pharisees their coming judgment, and He spoke a lament for the great city of Jerusalem, for it would be destroyed. When He finished, He and His disciples left the temple and went to the Mount of Olives. There His disciples said to Him, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3) They did not ask Him when He would return after His death, resurrection and ascension, for, the Scriptures say more than once, they as yet did not understand those things. They rather asked when the temple would be destroyed, and what would be the sign of His coming into His kingdom, and the dawning of the new age. Jesus answered that there would be distinct signs of these things. He said, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.” (Matthew 24:15, 16) The Jewish reader understood what those words meant, but Saint Luke, in his gospel, explained it for the Gentile reader. He wrote: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains.” (Luke 21:20, 21) Jesus told them that Jerusalem would be destroyed, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” With these words, Jesus alluded to the vision of Daniel the prophet, in which Daniel saw the Christ take possession of his kingdom. Daniel wrote:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13, 14)

Jesus taught that He is the one Daniel saw in his vision, and the destruction of Jerusalem, in which Jesus would take revenge upon His enemies, would be the sure sign that He is, in fact, king over all. Jesus then said to His disciples, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matthew 24:34) Jesus had a few months before told His disciples that some of them would live to see Him take his seat on the throne; here he tells them that it will happen in the lifetime of the generation then living. The destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple there, would signal the reign of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of God. It would also signal the end of the era of Jewish exclusivity, and the beginning of the era of Gentile inclusivity. Around forty years after Jesus ascended into

heaven to sit at the right hand of God, He sent the Roman army to destroy the city of Jerusalem, and its temple, thereby demonstrating his sovereignty.

Jesus, having spoken to His disciples of the Great Tribulation, turned to the subject of the Day of Judgment, the Consummation, the day on which He will judge all mankind. He told His disciples that He would become king in their lifetimes, and that signs would accompany His inauguration. He said, “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” (Matthew 24:32, 33) Of His judging the world, however, He said that no man could know the time, and it might be a long time in coming. He said, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matthew 24:36) Given that no man can know when He will come to judge, and that it might be many years before He does, His followers might be tempted to rest, and to cease to work for the advancement of His kingdom. So, He warned them to be both vigilant and diligent. They ought both to look forward to His coming to judge, and also to be about His business until He does. He said:

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 24:42-44)

Jesus then told three parables to illustrate the point. In the Parable of the Servants, Jesus said that if a man puts a servant in charge of giving food to his household, and later finds that his servant has done as he asked, then, because that servant was faithful and wise, he will put him in charge of his estate. If, however, the servant is evil, and, because his master is away, he beats the other servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards, then the master, when he returns, will punish that servant as a wicked hypocrite. (Matthew 24:45-51)

In the second parable, Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins. In the parable, there were ten virgins who took their lamps, and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five foolish. The foolish ones took their lamps, but no more oil; the wise took oil in their lamps, and also in flasks. When the bridegroom did not soon come to meet them, they fell asleep. At midnight, someone cried out, “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him.” The ten virgins awoke, and trimmed their lamps. The five foolish virgins had no more oil, however. They asked the others to give them some, but they answered that they had none to spare, and told them to go and buy more. When the five foolish virgins left to buy more oil, the bridegroom came and took the five wise virgins to the marriage feast, and the door was shut after them. When the five foolish virgins returned, and found the door latched, they said, “Lord, Lord, open to us,” but he answered them, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” The ten virgins are professing Christians, the bridegroom is Jesus, and the wedding feast represents the saints in heaven communing with the Lord. The five wise virgins are Christians that truly know the Lord Jesus. They have the Holy Spirit, and by God’s grace persevere to the end in faith and good works. The five foolish virgins are they that profess faith, but, lacking the Holy Spirit, they fail to persevere in faith and good works. According to Saint Matthew, Jesus, after telling the parable, exhorted his disciples, saying, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” (Matthew 25:13) Saint Luke put it in other words: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” (Luke 21:34) This is to say, every Christian must beware of the pleasures of this world, and

of the cares of this life, for they will have to give an account to Christ when He returns. Every Christian must live every day for the Lord Jesus, and not for pleasure, and not in worry. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount said:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:21-23)

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus taught that everyone must use the gifts that God has given him, or else He will cast him aside. (Matthew 25:14-30)

Saint Paul, with the teaching of Jesus in mind, wrote to the Thessalonians:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

The apostle did not need to teach the Thessalonians about when Judgment Day would be, for they already knew that it would come when no one expected. To unbelievers it will come as a thief in the night. They will think themselves safe and secure, but they will not be so. Destruction will suddenly come upon them, and they will lose all that they have. For Christians it is different. They are neither ignorant nor immoral. They expect Christ to return, although they do know not when, and they live accordingly. They do not ignore the coming Day, neither do they neglect their duties. They have the protection of the three virtues of faith, hope, and love. Judgment Day is not a day Christians should fear; rather, the thought of it should give them comfort, knowing that on that day the Lord will put all things right, and give to every man what he deserves. On that day, He will condemn the unrighteous, and openly acquit the righteous. The unrighteous will lose everything, but the righteous will inherit the earth. So, with these thoughts Christians ought to comfort and to encourage one another. The Great Tribulation is long past. Judgment Day is in the future. The Christian knows that Christ is king now, and he presently serves Him, working to advance His domain. Saint Paul wrote to the Galatians, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9)

Let us remember that Jesus received His kingdom when He ascended into heaven on clouds of glory. Let us bear in mind that He will one day come again to judge the world. Let us faithfully live for Him until He returns.

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen