

Further Reading 1

1. Meaning of the 'Clouds' Upon which the Lord of the Second Advent will Come
2. Meaning of the 'Fruit' in the Fall of Man
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4. Eschatology - The Meaning of the Last Days

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1. Meaning of the 'Clouds' Upon Which the LSA Will Come

Since Christ's return will take place through his birth on earth, what can be the meaning of the biblical prophecies that he will come on the clouds? To probe into this matter, we must first investigate what the clouds represent. The following passage is typical:

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. —*Rev. 1:7*

According to this verse, everyone should be able to see Christ when he returns. When St. Stephen was martyred, only he and those faithful Christians whose spiritual senses were open were able to see Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:5) Likewise, if Jesus is to descend from the spirit world as a spirit, then only those believers whose spiritual senses are open will be able to see him; thus not every eye would see Christ when he comes again. The biblical prophecy that everyone will see the Lord can be fulfilled only if he returns in the flesh. Since a body of flesh cannot ride on the clouds, the clouds in the verse must symbolize something else.

In the same passage, it is also written that even those who pierced Jesus will see his return. Those who pierced Jesus were Roman soldiers. However, those Roman soldiers will not be able to see the Lord at his return. To behold the returning Lord, those soldiers must be resurrected; but according to the Bible, those who will be resurrected at Christ's return are only those faithful

Christians who participate in the first resurrection. The rest of the spirits will be resurrected only after the passage of “a thousand years” in the Kingdom. (Rev. 20:4,5) Therefore, “every one who pierced him” must be a metaphor describing some other group of people, not the Roman soldiers. In fact, it refers to those Christians alive at the time of the Second Advent who hold fast to the belief that Jesus will return on the clouds. When Christ returns to the earth through a humble birth contrary to their expectation, they will not recognize him but will persecute him. If “every one who pierced him” is a metaphor, then the clouds in the same verse should also be metaphorical.

What do the clouds actually symbolize? Clouds are formed by the evaporation of impure water from the earth. In the Bible, water often symbolizes fallen people. (Rev.17:15, Ps. 144:7) We may deduce that clouds symbolize devout Christians whose hearts dwell in heaven and not on the earth because they have been reborn and raised from their fallen state. The Bible and other sacred scriptures also use the symbolism of clouds to indicate the multitudes. (Heb. 12:1; cf. Ezek. 38:9) We sometimes find this figure of speech used in casual conversation. In Moses’ course, the pillar of cloud which guided the Israelites by day represented Jesus, who was to come as the leader of Israel; the pillar of fire by night represented the Holy Spirit who, as Jesus’ counterpart, would guide Israel by the fire of inspiration. We can conclude that Jesus’ coming on the clouds signifies that he will emerge from among a group of reborn believers to become the leader of Christians, the Second Israel. Recall that when Jesus was asked about the place of his return, he replied, “Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.” (Luke 17:37) Jesus meant by this that he will return to the place where faithful believers have gathered, which basically signifies the same thing as the biblical prophecy that Christ will return on the clouds.

When we interpret the clouds metaphorically in this way, it is evident that at his First Coming Jesus himself symbolically came down from Heaven on the clouds. It is written, “The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven,” (1Cor. 15:47) and “No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.” (John 2:13) Even though Jesus was born on the earth, from the standpoint of the providence and with regard to his true value, he indeed came from Heaven. This is also the true meaning of the prophecy in Daniel (Dan. 7:13) which foretold that Jesus would come on the clouds.

WHY DID JESUS SAY THAT THE LORD WILL COME ON THE CLOUDS?

There are two reasons why Jesus prophesied that the Lord will return on the clouds. First, it was to prevent the delusions of antichrists from creating confusion among believers. If Jesus revealed plainly that he would return

through a physical birth, then it would have been impossible to prevent false messiahs from causing great confusion. Since Jesus emerged as the Messiah from a humble background, anyone from any social stratum with a certain level of spirituality could claim to be his Second Advent and dazzle the world with a great delusion. Fortunately, since most Christians have expected Christ to return on the clouds and have fixed their gaze upon the sky, this turmoil has been largely avoided. Now, however, since the time is full, the truth that Christ will return through a physical birth must be revealed.

Second, it was to encourage Christians who were walking a difficult path of faith. There are other occasions when Jesus gave paradoxical words to encourage his followers to accomplish God's Will as rapidly as possible. For example, he said, "Truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes." (Matt. 10:23) This led his disciples to believe that the Second Advent would take place in the near future. When Jesus told Peter of his approaching martyrdom, Peter asked him what would become of the disciple John. Jesus replied, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" (John 21:22) Jesus also said, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16:28) These sayings led the disciples to think they would meet the returning Jesus in their lifetime.

The hope of Jesus' imminent return inflamed the zeal of his disciples and gave them the strength to overcome persecution by Judaism and the Roman Empire. Encouraged by the ardent hope of the Second Advent, they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4) and established the early Christian Church, even amidst great adversity. Jesus wanted to inspire and encourage his disciples, who would be carrying a heavy cross. For this reason, he prophesied that he would come on the clouds in the power and glory of God and accomplish everything at lightning speed.

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2. Meaning of the 'Fruit' in the Fall of Man

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The Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The Root of Sin

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All people have an original mind which inclines them to reject evil and pursue goodness. Yet, even without our being aware of it, we are driven by evil forces to abandon the goodness which our original mind desires and to perform evil deeds which, in our innermost heart, we do not want to do. As long as these evil forces assail us, the sinful history of humanity will continue unabated. In Christianity, the master of these evil forces is known as Satan. We have been utterly unable to liquidate the forces of Satan because we have not understood Satan's identity or how he came to exist. To extirpate evil by its root, and thereby end sinful history and usher in an era of goodness, we must first expose the motivation and origin of Satan and recognize the destruction he has

wrought in human life. This explanation of the human Fall will clarify these issues.

THE ROOT OF SIN

No one has known the root of sin, which lies deep within and ceaselessly drives people toward the way of evil. On the basis of the Bible, Christians have held to a vague belief that Adam and Eve's eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the root of sin. Some Christians believe that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the fruit of an actual tree, while others believe that the fruit is a symbol, as much of the Bible is written in symbolic language. Let us consider the Bible's account of the human Fall and its differing interpretations in order to arrive at a complete explanation.

THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Adam and Eve fell when they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Many Christians to this day have thought that this was the fruit of an actual tree. But would God, the loving Parent of humanity, make a fruit which could cause the Fall to look so attractive? (Gen. 3:6) Would He place it where His children could reach it so easily? Furthermore, Jesus said, "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." (Matt. 15:11) How, then, can a food which one eats cause one to fall?

Humankind is beset by the *original sin*, which has been inherited from our first ancestors. Yet how can something one eats cause a sin which can be transmitted to one's descendants? The only way something can be inherited is by being passed down through the lineage. The temporary ill effects of eating something cannot be perpetuated through the long descent of lineage.

There are those who believe that God made the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and commanded Adam and Eve not to eat it in order to test their obedience to Him. We may ask: would the God of love test humans so mercilessly by a means that could cause their death? Adam and Eve knew they would die the moment they ate the fruit, for God had told them so. Yet still they ate it. Adam and Eve did not lack for food. They would not have risked their lives and disobeyed God only to obtain some delicacy. Therefore, we can surmise that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil could not have been an ordinary fruit. Rather, it must have been something so extraordinarily stimulating that even the fear of death did not deter them from grasping it.

If the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not a material fruit, then it must be a symbol which represents something else. Why should we stubbornly adhere to a literal interpretation of the fruit when so much of the Bible makes use of symbolism and metaphor? We would do well to abandon such a narrow and old-fashioned attitude of faith.

To learn what the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents, let us first investigate the *tree of life*, which stood next to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 2:9) When we grasp the meaning of the tree of life, then we can also understand the meaning of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

THE TREE OF LIFE

According to the Bible, the hope of fallen people is to approach or attain the tree of life: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” (Prov. 13:12) Thus, the Israelites of the Old Testament Age looked to the tree of life as their hope. Likewise, the hope of all Christians from the time of Jesus until today has been to approach and partake of the tree of life: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.” (Rev. 22:14) Since the ultimate hope of humankind is the tree of life, we can infer that the hope of Adam was also the tree of life.

It is written that when Adam fell, God blocked his path to the tree of life by stationing the cherubim with a flaming sword to guard it. (Gen. 3:24) From this we can also deduce that Adam’s hope before the Fall was the tree of life. Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden without having attained his hope, the tree of life. For fallen people ever since, the tree of life has remained a hope unfulfilled.

What was the hope of Adam during the time he was immature and growing toward perfection? He must have hoped to become a man who would realize God’s ideal of creation by growing to perfection without falling. The tree of life in fact symbolizes a man who has fully realized the ideal of creation. Perfected Adam was to be this ideal man. The tree of life thus symbolizes perfected Adam.

Had Adam not fallen but attained the tree of life, all his descendants could also have attained the tree of life. They would have built the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. But Adam fell, and God blocked his path to the tree with a flaming sword. Ever since, despite the best efforts of fallen people to restore the ideal

of creation, the tree of life has remained an unattainable dream. Burdened by the original sin, fallen people cannot complete the ideal of creation and become trees of life by their own efforts alone. For this ideal to be achieved, a man who has completed the ideal of creation must come to the earth as a tree of life. All of humanity must then be engrafted with him (Rom. 11:17 - As the Bible compares the relationship between Jesus and the believers to a vine and its branches (John 15:4-5) and portrays Jesus as the tree of life, the esoteric meaning of the olive tree in Rom. 11:17 is Jesus.—Ed.) and become one with him. Jesus was the man who came as this tree of life. The tree of life for which the faithful people of the Old Testament Age longed (Prov. 13:12) was none other than Jesus.

Ever since God blocked Adam's path to the tree of life by guarding it with the flaming sword, the tree could not be approached without first clearing the path. On the day of Pentecost, tongues of fire descended upon the saints, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:3,4) This event marked the clearing of the path and the moving aside of the flaming sword, which appeared as the tongues of fire preceding the rush of the Holy Spirit. It opened the way for all humanity to approach Jesus, the tree of life, and be engrafted with him.

Nonetheless, Christians have been engrafted with Jesus only spiritually. This is why the children of even the most devout Christian parents still inherit sin, which must be redeemed. Even the most faithful saints have not been free of the original sin, and thus cannot help but transmit it to their children. For this reason, Christ must come again on earth as the tree of life. By engrafting all humankind with himself once more, he is to redeem their original sin. Christians thus impatiently await the tree of life, which in the Book of Revelation symbolizes Christ at his Second Coming. (Rev. 22:14)

The purpose of God's providence of salvation is to restore the failure to attain the tree of life in the Garden of Eden by realizing the tree of life mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Due to the Fall, Adam could not fulfill the ideal of the first tree of life. (Gen. 2:9) In order to complete the salvation of fallen humanity, Jesus, the "last Adam," (1 Cor. 15:45) must come again as the tree of life in the Last Days.

THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

God did not create Adam to be alone; He also created Eve to be Adam's spouse. Just as there was a tree in the Garden of Eden which symbolized a perfected man, there also should have been a tree which represented a woman who has fully realized the ideal of creation. The tree of the knowledge of good

and evil, standing beside the tree of life, (Gen. 2:9) was this tree which, by fulfilling its good purpose, represents the ideal woman, perfected Eve.

The Bible refers to Jesus using the metaphors of a vine (John 15:5) and a branch. (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5) Likewise, to give us a hint about the secret of the human Fall, God provided the symbolism of two trees to represent perfected Adam and Eve.

THE IDENTITY OF THE SERPENT

In the Bible we read that a serpent tempted Eve to commit sin. (Gen. 3:4,5) What does the serpent symbolize? Let us investigate the true identity of the serpent, based on the Genesis account.

The serpent described in the Bible was able to converse with people. It caused the Fall of humans, who are spiritual beings. Furthermore, the serpent knew the Will of God, which strictly forbade human beings to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is compelling evidence that the being which the serpent symbolizes was a spiritual being.

It is written:

The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth. —*Rev. 12:9*

This ancient serpent is the very serpent which tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. Having lived in heaven before it was thrown down, this Devil or Satan must be a spiritual being. In fact, ever since the time of the human Fall, Satan has been continually turning the hearts of people toward evil. Since Satan is a spiritual being, the serpent which symbolizes him must also represent a spiritual being. These strands of biblical evidence confirm that the serpent who tempted Eve was not an animal but a symbol for a spiritual being.

The question arises whether the spiritual being symbolized by the serpent existed before the creation of the universe or was created as a part of the universe. If this being existed before the creation of the universe and had a purpose contrary to that of God, then the conflict between good and evil in the universe would be unavoidable and perpetual. God's providence of restoration, then, would be in vain. Moreover, monotheism, which holds that everything in the universe was created by one God, would be unfounded. We are left with the conclusion that the spiritual being represented by the serpent was originally created with a good purpose, but later fell and became Satan.

What kind of spiritual being in God's creation could have conversed with people, understood the Will of God, and lived in heaven? What kind of being, even after it had fallen and become degraded to an evil being, could transcend time and space to dominate the human soul? There are no beings endowed with such characteristics other than angels. The verse "God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom" (2 Pet. 2:4) supports the conclusion that the serpent, which tempted human beings and sinned, is an angel.

A serpent has a forked tongue. It depicts someone who utters contradictory things with one tongue and lives a two-faced life with one heart. A serpent twists its body around its prey before devouring it, a metaphor for someone who ensnares others for his own benefit. For these reasons, the Bible likened the angel who tempted human beings to a serpent.

THE FALL OF THE ANGEL AND THE FALL OF HUMAN BEINGS

It is clear that the serpent who tempted the human beings to fall was an angel, and that this angel became Satan when he sinned and fell. Let us now investigate what kind of sin the angel and the human beings committed.

THE CRIME OF THE ANGEL

And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day; just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. — *Jude 6-7*

From this passage we can infer that the angel fell as a result of an illicit sexual relationship.

Fornication is a crime which cannot be committed alone. With whom did the angel commit the illicit sexual act in the Garden of Eden? In order to unveil this mystery, let us examine what kind of sin the human beings committed.

THE CRIME OF THE HUMAN BEINGS

We read that before they fell, Adam and Eve were both naked, and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:25) After the Fall, however, they felt ashamed of their nakedness and sewed fig leaves together into aprons to cover their lower parts. (Gen. 3:7) If they had committed a crime by eating some actual fruit from a tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then they certainly would have covered their hands or mouths instead. It is human nature to

conceal one's faults. Thus, the act of covering their lower parts shows that these parts, and not their mouths, were the source of their shame. In Job 31:33 it is written, "If I have concealed my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom." (KJV) Adam concealed his lower parts after the Fall; this indicates that his blemish was in his lower parts. Adam and Eve's sexual parts were the source of their shame because they were the instruments of their sinful deed.

In the world before the human Fall, what act would one be willing to carry out even at the clear risk of one's life? It could be nothing else but the act of love. God's purpose of creation, described in the blessings "be fruitful and multiply," (Gen. 1:28) can be achieved only through love. Accordingly, from the viewpoint of God's purpose of creation, love should be the most precious and sacred act. But because the sexual act was the very cause of the Fall, people often regard it with shame and even contempt. In conclusion, human beings fell through an act of illicit sexual intercourse.

THE ILLICIT SEXUAL ACT BETWEEN THE ANGEL AND THE HUMAN BEINGS

Thus far, we have explained that an angel seduced human beings to fall, and that both the angel and the human beings fell due to illicit sexual love. Human beings and angels are the only spiritual beings in the universe who are capable of having love relationships. We can deduce that the illicit sexual relationship must have involved the angel and human beings.

Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires." (John 8:44) Since the Devil is identified as Satan, (Rev. 12:9) we can assert that human beings are descendants of Satan, the "ancient serpent" who tempted human beings. Through what circumstances did humankind become the descendants of the fallen angel, Satan? There was an illicit sexual relationship between the angel and the first ancestors. As the fruit of that relationship, all humanity is of the lineage of Satan. When St. Paul wrote, "we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies," (Rom. 8:23) he was acknowledging that we fallen people stem from the lineage of Satan, not the lineage of God. John the Baptist reproached the people, calling them "a brood of vipers," (Matt. 3:7) that is, children of Satan. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" (Matt. 23:33) These verses affirm that we are the offspring of an illicit sexual relationship involving the angel and our first ancestors. This, in fact, lies at the heart of the human Fall.

THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was shown earlier to symbolize Eve. What does the fruit of this tree represent? It signifies the love of Eve. As a tree multiplies by its fruit, Eve should have borne good children through her godly love. Instead, she bore evil children through her satanic love. Eve was created in an immature state; she was to reach full maturity only after going through a period of growth. Thus, it was possible for her to bear either good fruit or evil fruit through her love. This is why Eve's love is symbolized by the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and why Eve is symbolized by the tree.

What did eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil signify? When we eat something, we make it a part of ourselves. Eve was to have eaten the fruit of goodness by consummating her God centered love. Then she would have received the essence of God's divinity and multiplied a good lineage. However, she ate of the fruit of evil by consummating her evil love centered on Satan. Hence, she received the essence of his evil nature and multiplied an evil lineage from which our sinful society descended. Accordingly, Eve's eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil denotes that she consummated a satanic love relationship with the angel which bound her in blood ties to him.

God cursed the fallen angel, saying, "upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life." (Gen. 3:14) "Upon your belly you shall go" means that the angel would become a miserable being, unable to function properly or to perform its original service. To "eat dust" means that ever since the angel was thrown down from heaven, (Isa. 14:12; Rev. 12:9) he has been deprived of life elements from God. Instead, he has had to subsist on evil elements gleaned from the sinful world.

THE ROOT OF SIN

We have learned from the above elucidation of the Bible that the root of sin was not that the first human ancestors ate a fruit, but rather that they had an illicit sexual relationship with an angel (symbolized by a serpent). Consequently, they could not multiply God's good lineage but instead multiplied Satan's evil lineage. There is ample evidence which helps us recognize that the root of human sin stems from sexual immorality. We know that the original sin has been perpetuated through lineal descent from one generation to the next. This is because the root of sin was solidified by a sexual relationship that binds one in ties of blood. Furthermore, those religions which emphasize the need to purge sin regard fornication as a cardinal sin, and they have taught the virtues of chastity and restraint in order to curb it. This is an indication that the root of sin is found in lustful desires. The Israelites performed the rite of circumcision as a condition for sanctification. They qualified themselves as God's chosen people by draining blood, because the

root of sin lies in having taken in through an unchaste act the evil blood which permeates our being.

Sexual promiscuity is a principal cause of the downfall of numerous heroes, patriots and nations. Even in the most outstanding people, the root of sin—illicit sexual desire—is constantly active in their souls, sometimes without their conscious awareness. We may be able to eradicate all other evils by establishing moral codes through religion, by thoroughly implementing various educational programs, and by reforming the socio-economic systems that foster crime. But no one can prevent the plague of sexual promiscuity, which has become increasingly prevalent as the progress of civilization makes lifestyles more comfortable and indolent. Therefore, the hope of an ideal world is an empty dream as long as this root of all evils has not been eradicated at its source. Christ at his Second Advent must be able to solve this problem once and for all.

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3. Meaning of the Commandment ‘Do Not Eat’

Please read for me

WHY GOD SET UP THE COMMANDMENT AS AN OBJECT OF FAITH

Why did God nurture the faith of Adam and Eve by giving them the commandment, “Do not eat of the fruit”? In their immature state, Adam and Eve could not be directly governed by God through love. Because the power of love is stronger than the power of the Principle, God foresaw that if they ever formed a common base with the Archangel, there was a possibility that they could succumb to the power of deviant, unprincipled love and fall. To prevent this, God gave Adam and Eve the commandment that forbade them from relating with the Archangel in this way. No matter how powerful the unprincipled love of the Archangel might be, had Adam and Eve adhered to God’s commandment, forming a common base with God and engaging in give and take with Him and no other, the power of the Archangel’s unprincipled love would not have affected them and they would never have fallen.

Tragically, Adam and Eve did not obey the commandment, but formed a common base with the Archangel and had give and take with him. Hence, the power of illicit love pushed them off the track.

It was not only to prevent their fall that God gave immature human beings the commandment. God also wanted them to enjoy dominion over the natural world—including the angels—by inheriting His creative nature. In order to inherit this creatorship, human beings should perfect themselves through their faith in the Word as their own portion of responsibility.

God gave the commandment not to the Archangel but only to the human beings. God wished to exalt the dignity of human beings as bestowed by the Principle of Creation, which entitled them to stand as God’s children and govern even the angels.

THE PERIOD DURING WHICH THE COMMANDMENT WAS NECESSARY

Was God’s commandment not to eat of the fruit binding forever? God’s second blessing was to be fulfilled when Adam and Eve entered God’s direct dominion of love, by joining as true husband and wife and bearing and raising children in God’s love. (Gen. 1:28) Indeed, the Principle mandates that human beings eat of the fruit once they reach full maturity of character. The power of love is stronger than the power of the Principle. Had Adam and Eve reached perfection, become a godly husband and wife, and experienced God’s direct governance by the absolute power of His love, their conjugal love would have become absolute. No person, no power in the universe could ever break that bond of love. At this point, Adam and Eve would never fall. There would have been no way that the love of the Archangel, who is inferior to human beings, could ever have severed the conjugal love of Adam and Eve once it was grounded firmly in God. Accordingly, God’s commandment, “Do not eat of the fruit,” was binding upon Adam and Eve only while they were immature.

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4. Eschatology - The Meaning of the Last Days

Bible Verses Concerning the Signs of the Last Days

Heaven and Earth Destroyed, and a New Heaven and New Earth Created

Heaven and Earth Judged by Fire

The Dead Rising from their Tombs

People on Earth Caught Up to Meet the Lord in the Air

The Sun Darkened, the Moon Not Giving Light and the Stars Falling from Heaven

Please read for me

When the disbelief of the chosen people led Jesus to go the way of the cross, he could accomplish only spiritual salvation. It remains for him to return and accomplish the goal of the providence of restoration both spiritually and physically and restore the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Hence, the day of the Christ's Second Advent is also the Last Days. For this reason Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of man" (Luke 17:26) and prophesied that many natural calamities would break out at his return. (Matt. 24:7,29)

BIBLE VERSES CONCERNING THE SIGNS OF THE LAST DAYS

Many Christians believe that in the Last Days natural calamities and radical changes beyond the imagination of modern men will take place, as is literally written in the Bible. However, if they understood that human history is the history of God's providence, which has been restoring the world to the original state intended by God at the Creation, then they would know that the signs of the Last Days prophesied in the Bible will not take place literally. Let us investigate what the prophecies concerning the Last Days actually symbolize.

HEAVEN & EARTH DESTROYED, AND A NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH CREATED

It is written that God determined to destroy the earth in Noah's time. (Gen. 6:13) Noah's time was the Last Days, yet the world was not destroyed. The

earth is eternal, as the following verses indicate: “A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever;” (Eccl. 1:4) “He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever.” (Ps. 78:69) The earth was created as the object partner of God. God, the subject partner, is eternal; likewise, earth, the object partner, should also be eternal. Almighty God would never be pleased with having created a world so fragile it could possibly perish because of Satan. What, then, is the meaning of the prophecies of the earth’s destruction in the Last Days? For instance:

The heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. - 2 Pet. 3:12-13

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. - Rev. 21:1; cf. Isa. 66:22

To destroy a nation is to overthrow its sovereignty, while to erect a new nation is to establish a new sovereignty. Likewise, the prophecies that heaven and earth will be destroyed mean that the tyranny of Satan will be overthrown. To create a new heaven and new earth means to restore heaven and earth to God’s sovereignty founded on Christ.

HEAVEN AND EARTH JUDGED BY FIRE

What is the meaning of the prophecy that in the Last Days “the heavens will be kindled and dissolved and the elements will melt with fire”? (2Pet. 3:12) Malachi, prophesying of Jesus to come, spoke of a day burning with the fire of judgment. (Mal. 4:1) Jesus came into the world to cast this judgment, as he said, “For judgment I came into this world.” (John 9:39; also John 5:22) Jesus also said, “I came to cast fire upon the earth.” (Luke 12:49) “Fire” here represents the means of the judgment for which Jesus came into the world. Nevertheless, there is no record that in his time Jesus judged the world with literal fire. The verses referring to fire must be symbolic. It is written, “Is not my word like fire, says the Lord?” (Jer.23:29) Therefore, judgment by fire represents judgment by the Word of God.

Let us look for some biblical examples concerning judgment by the Word: “He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day.” (John 12:48) “The lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth,” (2 Thess. 2:8) that is, by his word. Moreover, “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.” (Isa. 11:4) “He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to

life.” (John 5:24) It follows that the judgment by fire which Jesus came to bring was the judgment by the Word.

What is the reason that Jesus judges by the Word? Human beings are created through the Word. (John 1:3) God’s ideal of creation was that the first human ancestors fulfill the purpose of the Word by incarnating the Word. Yet they did not keep the Word of God and fell; thus, they failed to fulfill the purpose of the Word. Since then, God has tried to fulfill the purpose of the Word by recreating fallen human beings through the Word. This is the providence of restoration based on truth, the Word as revealed in the Scriptures. It is written, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” (John 1:14) Jesus completely realized the Word. He will come again as the standard of the judgment by the Word and judge the extent to which humanity has fulfilled the purpose of the Word. Judgment in this context contributes to the attainment of the goal of restoration, which is the realization of the purpose of the Word. Hence, in the course of the providence, the Word must be set up as the standard through which judgment can be carried out. Jesus lamented, “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49) As the incarnation of the Word, (John 1:14) he was grieved that the people of Israel did not receive the life-giving words which he proclaimed.

THE DEAD RISING FROM THEIR TOMBS

It is written in the Bible that in the Last Days the dead will rise from their graves:

With the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. . . the dead in Christ will rise first. - I Thess. 4:16

We can understand the meaning of this prophecy by examining a similar event, when the dead rose from their tombs at the time of Jesus’ death:

The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. - Matt. 27:52-53

This verse does not mean that the decomposed bodies of the saints literally rose up from their graves. If the physical bodies of the saints of the Old Testament Age had actually risen from their tombs and appeared before many people in Jerusalem, they would certainly have testified to the people about Jesus, since they already knew that he was the Messiah. After hearing such testimony, who among the inhabitants of Jerusalem would not have believed in the crucified Jesus? Additionally, if the saints really had risen from their tombs

in the flesh, then surely their deeds would have been recorded in the Bible. However, we find no such records.

What does the Scripture mean when it says that the bodies of the saints rose from their tombs? This record was made by people who could perceive the spirits of the past saints being resurrected spiritually and appearing on the earth. This is much like Moses and Elijah who, as spirits, briefly appeared before Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Matt. 17:3) What does “the tomb” symbolize? The realm of form spirits, the region of the spirit world where the spirits of the Old Testament saints were abiding, appears to be a dark place when viewed from Paradise, the realm of the spirit world opened up by Jesus. Hence, it is referred to as a tomb. The spirits of these saints had all lived in that lower region of the spirit world before they appeared to spiritually-attuned believers on the earth.

PEOPLE ON EARTH CAUGHT UP TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR

Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.
- I Thess. 4:17

The “air” mentioned in this verse does not refer to the sky over our heads. In the Bible, “earth” is often a symbol for the fallen world under the sway of evil sovereignty, while “Heaven” is often a symbol for the sinless world of good sovereignty. The omnipresent God certainly dwells everywhere on the earth, yet we pray, “Our Father who art in heaven.” (Matt. 6:9) Even though Jesus was born on the earth, he is referred to as “he who descended from Heaven, the Son of man.” (John 3:13) Meeting the Lord in the air means that the saints will receive the Lord in the world of good sovereignty when Christ comes again and restores the Kingdom of Heaven on earth by defeating the kingdom of Satan.

THE SUN DARKENED, THE MOON NOT GIVING LIGHT AND THE STARS FALLING FROM HEAVEN

In the Last Days, Jesus said, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven.” (Matt. 24:29) How are we to understand this verse?

It is written that Joseph, the eleventh of the twelve sons of Jacob, had a dream:

Then he dreamed another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream; and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven

stars were bowing down to me.” But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?” - Gen. 37:9-10

When Joseph later became the prime minister of Egypt, his parents and brothers bowed down before him, as the dream had foretold. In his dream, the sun and moon symbolized the parents, while the stars symbolized their children. As will be explained, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the True Parents who came to give rebirth to humanity in place of Adam and Eve. Therefore, in this prophecy from Matthew, the sun and moon represent Jesus and the Holy Spirit, while the stars represent the faithful believers who are their children. Elsewhere, Jesus is likened to the true light because he came as the incarnation of the Word and shone forth the light of truth. (John 1:9,14) Here, the sunlight means the light of the words of Jesus, and the moonlight means the light of the Holy Spirit, who came as the Spirit of truth. (John 16:13)

For the sun to be darkened and the moon to lose its light means that the New Testament Word given by Jesus and the Holy Spirit will lose its luster. How can the Word as revealed in the New Testament possibly lose its light? The Old Testament Word was eclipsed when Jesus and the Holy Spirit came and gave us the New Testament Word, which fulfilled the Old Testament Word. (2 Cor. 3:7-11) Likewise, when Christ returns and gives the new truth in order to fulfill the New Testament Word and build a new heaven and new earth, (Rev. 21:1) the Word which he gave at his first coming will lose its light. It is said that the Word will lose its light because, with the coming of a new era, the period of the mission of the old truth will have lapsed.

The prophecy that the stars will fall from heaven signifies that in the Last Days many faithful Christian believers will make a misstep and fall from God’s grace. At the time of Jesus, the leaders of the Jewish people were all yearning for the coming of the Messiah, but they met their downfall when they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah and opposed him. Likewise, Christians who have been anxiously awaiting the return of Jesus are likely to make the same misjudgment and fall when he actually returns.

Jesus asked, “Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8) On another occasion he said he would declare to devout believers, “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.” (Matt. 7:23) Jesus gave these warnings to the Christians of the Last Days because he foresaw that they would be likely to disbelieve and trespass against him at his Second Advent.

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