

The *Shepherd's Rod* Clarification of the Unexpected Coming Found in Matthew 24:36.

Answerer Book, No. 2, pp. 23, 24.

MAY WE KNOW THE HOUR?

Question No. 15:

“Early Writings,” p. 285, states that God will announce the day and hour of His return. And “The Shepherd’s Rod,” Vol. 2, p. 255, concludes from its treatment of the flood that this crowning event of the ages will come on a Wednesday night. But Christ says: “. . . of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My father only.” Matt. 24:36. How can the two be reconciled?

Answer:

The *Rod* is in no respect setting time for Christ’s return. Though it concludes from the Flood Study that He may come for His own on some mid-week night, it does not even intimate on which Wednesday night that may be. The *Rod* does not pretend to know that day or hour. And concerning the statement in *Early Writings*, Christ’s words in Matthew 24:36 do not preclude the possibility of His ever making known the day and hour of His coming. Indeed, though the Scriptures do say that even the angels *know not* the hour, yet if they are ever to be ready to start out with the Lord upon His second advent, certainly they must someday

beforehand be told of it in order to make ready and to start out. And although no man now knows the day or hour, yet if the Father sees fit to declare it, we cannot but know it.

Moreover, this secret coming (Matt. 24:36) may be another than that commonly understood as “the second coming.” (For further study on this subject, read out Tract No. 3, *The Harvest*, 1942 Edition, pp. 45-53.)

Tract No. 3, *The Harvest*, 1942 Edition, pp. 45-53.

Since this fearsome truth, as here revealed, finds its counterpart in Christ's parable of the wheat and the tares, the parables must necessarily therefore teach the investigative

Judgment Among the Living.

"Let both grow together," commands Christ, in regard to the commingling of the wheat and tares, "until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn." Matt. 13:30.

Here the Lord is parabolically teaching that a time of investigation will come, and that then the angels will remove the sinners *from "the congregation of the righteous."* Ps. 1:5

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just." Matt. 13:47-49.

In both of these parables, Christ is sounding the forewarning that the investigative judgment will take place in the time called "harvest," which is the end of the world—the time in which the 2300 days culminate, just as the angel declared: "Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision." Dan. 8:17. ". . . shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days." Dan. 8:26. ". . . for yet the vision is for many days." Dan. 10:14.

Pointing directly to the time that the investigative judgment shall take place among the living, Malachi parallels both parables in his prophecy:

". . . the Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, . . . But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Mal. 3:1-3.

As the cleansings called for in the par-ables and in Malachi's prophecy have never taken place, the investigative judgment of the living is obviously, then, yet future. This investigative work is therefore occasioned by the work of separation in the earthly sanctuary (church), as brought to view also in Ezekiel 9:

"And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the fore-heads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

“And to the others He said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.” Verses 2-6.

Here the people are shown to be in a mixed state (tares and wheat commingled), with the time just ahead of them when on the one hand those who have sighed and cried for the abominations in their midst shall receive the mark of deliverance, while on the other hand those who have not sighed and cried shall be left without the mark, to perish (in their sins) under the angels’ slaughter weapons.

From this separation—the one in the church—come forth *the first fruits*.

Then follows the separation from among the nations, as seen in the parable of Matthew 25, prophetically describing Christ’s coming, though not the one viewed in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, for at the time of the latter, “the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air”; whereas at the time of the former, “when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory [the kingdom-church, which up to this point consists only of the first fruits].

“And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say

unto them on His right hand [these being the second fruits], Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt. 25:31-34, 41.

From this separation—the one among the nations—come forth the second fruits.

The angels who are round about the throne in the heavenly sanctuary during the judgment of Daniel 7:9, 10 and of Revelation 5:11 shall, as the parables explain, descend with “the Son of man” when He comes “to His temple” (His church) to separate by judgment “the wicked from among the just,” and to purge as gold and silver those “who may abide the day of His coming . . . that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” Mal. 3:2, 3.

In graphic demonstration that He will come to earth with all His angels to execute judgment upon the living, the Lord revealed Himself prophetically to Ezekiel as being brought enthroned to earth by four living creatures just before the slaughter of the hypocrites in the church takes place. And as each of the living creatures has the face of a lion, the face of a calf, the face of a man, and the face of an eagle (Ezek. 1:10),—the same judicial insignia as have the beasts who are before the throne in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 4:7) in the time of the judgment of the dead,—and as they descend to earth, they thereby symbolically show that the work of the mediatorial-judicial throne which convenes and presides over the judgment of the dead is extended to earth.

This extension, so far as we are able to know now, must take place at the opening of the

seventh seal (Rev. 8:1), for at that time the celestial voices, which opened the judgment of the dead, cease in the heavenly sanctuary and begin, after the half hour's silence, to sound on earth. In other words, just as in heaven at the opening of the judgment of the dead, there were "lightnings and thunderings and voices" (Rev. 4:5), likewise on earth at the opening of the "judgment of the living," there are "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." Rev. 8:5.

With the judgment of the dead, however, the work of separation takes place in the books in the heavenly sanctuary; whereas with the judgment of the living, the separation takes place among the people in the church as well as among their names in the books in the heavenly sanctuary, thus showing that both sanctuaries will finally be cleansed.

Inescapably, therefore, the Lord's coming to His temple (Mal. 3:1-3), His coming with all His angels (Matt. 25), and His coming enthroned above the living creatures (Ezek. 1),—all three representing the same event, as has been shown,—take place at the beginning of the judgment of the living: the time in which the judicial activities of the heavenly sanctuary extend to the earthly sanctuary—the church.

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud," exclaimed John the Revelator, envisaging the same coming variously described by Malachi, Matthew, and Ezekiel, "and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud

thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." Rev. 14:14-16.

This coming of the Son of man is plainly, therefore, not when the resurrected and the living righteous are caught up together to meet Him in the air: for verses 17-20, following the ones quoted in the paragraph above, reveal that after He came and reaped the earth, "another angel . . . having a sharp sickle" came and reaped a second harvest before the wrath of God—the seven last plagues (Rev. 15:1)—was poured out upon the wicked.

Thus again and for the fourth time it is seen that there are two different comings of the Son of man: the one to "sever the wicked from among the just" in the church (Matt. 13:49), and then immediately to call the just from among the wicked in Babylon (Rev. 18:4); the other to take the saints, both the resurrected and the living, to the mansions which He has prepared for them (1 Thess. 4:16; John 14:1-3).

At the former coming of the Son of man, the stone which smote the great image was cut out without hands (without man's aid, and by the Lord Himself) because, as the Lord says, "there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld Me. And I will tread down the people in Mine anger, and make them drunk in My fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth." Isa. 63:5, 6.

This work of separation, or cleansing, brought to view in the parable of Matthew 13:30 and again in that of Matthew 13:47-49, also in the prophecy of Malachi 3:1-3 and in that of Ezekiel 9, as well as in Revelation 14, is directly applicable to the judgment day for the living;

but the cleansing of the sanctuary at the end of the 2300 days, according to Daniel 8:14 and Daniel

7:9, 10, applies directly to the *Judgment Among the Dead*.”—*Tract No. 3, 3rd Ed.*, pp. 42-49.

Shepherd's Rod, Vol. 2, pp. 180-86.

The Ten Virgins—Matthew 25

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” (Verses 1-13.)

Observe that the 25th chapter is a continuation of the 24th. Mark the word, “then,” meaning the time they fulfilled the prophetic words contained in verses 48-51. The virgins are a figure of the church. Number “ten,” has the symbolic meaning of universal (the church as a body). Note that they are **all** “virgins.” The 144,000 are designated by the same word. (See Rev. 14:4.) The word “virgins,” signify that the class represented by them (ten), are not those who are called out from Babylon

(fallen churches) at the time the “cry” is made. For, if they were to come out of Babylon by the call “Come out of **her**, my people” (Rev. 18:4), they would have been **defiled** with “**women**” (fallen churches), and therefore, could not be called “virgins.” Thus, the message of the “Midnight Cry” must find them in the house of God—virgins.

The “Midnight Cry” was first proclaimed prior to 1844, and the coming of the “Bridegroom” was Christ’s coming to the Most Holy place in the heavenly sanctuary for the investigative judgment of the saints. The **investigation** being in **two** sections; first, the judgment for the **dead**, and the second for the **living**, the “**cry**” must be repeated, otherwise we would have no present truth for the time of the judgment of the **living**. The “**cry**” for the **living** being of a greater importance to the world than the one for the dead, and as the “virgins” are a figure of the living church, the parable must have a direct application to the church at this present time,—the coming of the bridegroom for the judgment of the living. But indirectly it points back to the commencement of the “Midnight Cry” (the first angel’s message—the judgment for the dead). The messages being of the same event, judgment, both (for the living and for the dead) are called the “**midnight cry**.” The same is proven by the parable itself.

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.” Note that they “slumbered and slept” **before** the cry was made. In the summer of 1844, midway be-

tween the time when it was first thought that the 2300 days would end (on March 21), and the second date (October 22 of the same year), this period they applied as being the “tarrying time.” But mark that the “**cry**” had been going on for some years (the message by Miller), and the tarrying time was applied at its close after they had discovered their miscalculation; which is contrary to a proper application of the parable; for according to the parable they tarried before they cry was made. Therefore, the tarrying time must be the judgment for the dead, before the bridegroom came to the investigation of the living; in which time the “ten virgins” developed. So, that is the time in which they all slumbered and slept. This application is also in perfect harmony with the message to the Laodiceans. (See Rev. 3:14-19; Isa. 52:1, 2.)

If the foregoing application is correct, then at the end of the tarrying period, or just prior to the commencement of the judgment of the living, there must be a message—“cry”; and if the “virgins” are a figure of the church as a body in the time of the “cry,” then, the message must be for the church only. This is also proven in “The Great Controversy,” page 425. In as much as there is just such a “cry” presented in “The Shepherd’s Rod,” Vol. 1, it not only shows that the application of the parable is correct, but it also proves that church to be the “House of God.”

“They **all** slumbered and slept.” This statement by the Master proves that the church as a body has been asleep—being in perfect harmony with the previous explanation of the 24th chapter of Matthew. Five were foolish and five wise. Number “ten” being a symbol of the church as a body, the number **five** and **five**, mean half and half. The denomination numbers at the present time a little over 300,000; half of this number would be about 150,000. If we should subtract the dead material (backsliders, but still on the church record), the number derived after such

deduction would be about 144,000. Thus again it proves that the 144,000 are the **five wise virgins**; and the foolish ones are they who shall fall under the destroying weapons in the hand of the “five men.”

“But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.” The “oil” is a symbol of the Spirit of God in the form of a message (truth); for, it is the substance that gives the light (the prophetic Word of God). The lamp must be a symbol of the **heart** into which the Word (oil) is being retained. The trimming of their lamps, is the “trimming” of their hearts; that is, their conscience being aroused they began to show interest. But only five of them had an extra supply of oil in their vessels. As they started out to meet the bridegroom, the lamps of the foolish ones went out; and as they found themselves in darkness, it made their progress impossible. Now, the question arises: What made their lamps go out, and why could they go backward, but not forward? As the message of the judgment for the dead was the present truth since 1844, at the beginning of the judgment for the living (when the cry was made), it became present truth no longer. Consequently their lamps went out. They could not move forward because they were **foolish**; that is, they did not accept the light—the judgment for the living. Was the “oil” beyond their reach? The words in the parable prove that they all heard the “cry, “arose, and trimmed their lamps.” Five of them failed to get the supply of oil because they were “**foolish**,”—they did not study for themselves. Allowed others to think for them; they chose the easy, popular side, and accepted the decisions of the leaders, copies the mistakes of others and were thus left without a supply of oil,—robbed of the truth, cheated of glory, and left in darkness!

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.” At last the foolish virgins saw themselves in darkness. Then they went to the wise and asked for oil as

a gift; "But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." The oil is sold and there must be something given in exchange to obtain the supply. The price they had to pay was to "sigh and cry for the abominations done in the midst thereof," give up sinning and obey the truth. Their receipt for the value of exchange would have been the seal of the living God in their foreheads.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." As the foolish virgins at last came to the door, it is evident that they obtained the oil (learned of the message) but there had been a delay—the door was shut, and they were left out. Now, why were they unconcerned at first, and very zealous at last? The experience in this instance is about the same as that of the deluge. While Noah preached the coming of the flood, the world paid little attention to this message; but those who believed, went into the ark at a given time and the door was closed. But not long afterwards, signs of Noah's prediction appeared; and as drops of rain began to fall the wicked multitude became alarmed and rushed for the ark, but the door was closed and they were left out. The door that "was shut," is a symbol showing that probation for the church had closed just shortly after the foolish virgins became alarmed. At last they were will-ing to pay the price and buy the oil; but it was not a change of heart, only the fear of losing out. Their course of action had left them without the seal—"the man with the writer's inkhorn" had passed them by. What a terrible mistake! What a disappointment! Almost saved, but entirely lost.

"The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the

sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event; and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ, in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25."—"The Great Controversy p. 426.

The description by Daniel applies to the commencement of the judgment for the dead; but the one by Malachi 3:1-3, is applicable to the judgment for the living—all of the same event—day of atonement—cleansing of the sanctuary.

"The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view, takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, which is the capitol and representative of the kingdom, is called 'the bride, the lamb's wife.' Said the angel to John, 'Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.' 'He carried me away in the spirit,' says the prophet, 'and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.' Clearly, then, the bride represents the holy city, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. If **guests**, they cannot be represented also as the **bride**. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of days in heaven; 'dominion, and glory, and a kingdom'; He will receive the New Jerusalem, the capitol of His kingdom, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to 'sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' at His table in His kingdom, to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb."—Id., pp. 426, 427.

The virgins were called to meet Him, and thus by faith go in with Him to appear before the Father—the Great Judge. The seal is the permit; it places their names in the Lamb's book of Life, and thus it grants to them the right to appear before the Father in the judgment; not in person, but in figure; thus having their sins blotted out. Matthew 24:36, 50, are descriptions of the same event. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 25:13.) This has reference to the time of the judgment, and not of His coming to earth; for, the saints shall know the day and the hour of Christ's coming in the clouds to receive the redeemed, as it shall be announced by the Father shortly before His coming. (See "The Great Controversy," p. 640.)

Summary of the Ten Virgins

The number, "ten", being a symbol of universal, it represents the church as a body prior to the commencement of the judgment of the living—in the sealing period of the 144,000, and before the "Loud Cry" of the Third Angel's Message; being the period of the **first** fruits of the harvest. The five wise virgins were they who trusted in God and His word only; having no confidence in man, and were hungry for truth, searching for light, and gladly accepting it when it came. Thus they received the seal of God's approval, their sins were blotted out, and their lives made sure—they passed from condemnation and death into glory and life eternal. They are God's servants, kings and priests—144,000 in number.

The five foolish virgins are they who had confidence in men; they were willing that others should think and study for them. Their love for this world and the things of it, exceeded their love for Christ and the world to come. They had no true sense of the awful result of sin. Their zeal for self, drowned their zeal for the house of God and His honor. They were

satisfied with their lamps trimmed and but little oil in them. They saw no necessity for more light—prophets, truth or message. They said in their hearts, we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. They were prejudiced against light upon the word of God, and accepted not the truth because the channel through which it came was not of their choice.

The knowledge of present truth, which the five foolish virgins possessed since 1844 is the judgment of the dead, and was the only oil in their lamps. When the judgment of the living commenced, and the "cry was made," they were found without this extra oil in their vessels; they had neglected their Lord's command: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Thus when the wise ones started out to meet the bridegroom the lamps of the foolish went out, for, the judgment of the dead had passed. Therefore, it was present truth no more, and thus they were left in darkness. At the beginning of the judgments of God they saw their mistake and rushed for the ark of safety, but it was beyond their reach for they knew nothing of the message, and by the time they acquired it (filled their lamps with oil), there had been a delay, the angel had passed "through the city, through Jerusalem," the church—the sealing was finished, and probation for the church had closed—the door was shut. Thus they were left out. Then they came with these words: "Lord, Lord, open unto us, But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." "Appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." **What** a disappointment that will be!

It will be noticed that the close of probation for the church and the one for the world are two different events. The former is a miniature representation of the latter. The Scripture for the preceding one is found in Matthew 25:11, 12; but of the final one we read: "He that is

unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Rev. 22:11, 12.) At this time those who were like the five foolish virgins, will say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” (Jer. 8:20.) “And they shall

wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.” (Amos 8:12.)”—[*Shepherd's Rod*, Vol. 2, pp. 180-86.](#)

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