

FLIGHT IN WINTER.

MATT. 24:20.

From inquiries which we now and then hear made regarding duty, we are made aware that to "line upon line," another line should be added.

It is dreary work to take a journey – on foot – in winter; but under some circumstances, it becomes necessary; nevertheless, it is desirable to avoid it if possible.

If we know we have a journey to perform, it is much better to attend to it when circumstances are most propitious.

Jesus, when speaking to the disciples concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, says, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." The careful and unprejudiced Bible student sees that the destruction of ancient Jerusalem is a type of the dissolution of the nominal Christian Church; that the latter is due at the end of this age, according to prophecy, even as the destruction of Jerusalem was due at the close of the Jewish age: that what was an historical fact regarding the former, is a spiritual fact, further on, concerning the latter; that the latter is the counterpart of the former, and so treated by Jesus in the 24th of Matthew; so much so that many have found it difficult to tell where his predictions concerning the one ended and the other began.

How many, recognizing that the summer of "the Church's" prosperity is ended, and the "harvest past," are getting uneasy as the winter approaches and the love of many waxes cold; and their unrest is increased in proportion as they come to realize the shortness of the bed, and the narrowness of the covering.

Then again the contraction of these necessary comforts of a cold winter's night become the more apparent as they come to "understand doctrine." (See Isa. 28:19,20. margin.) However strange and unreasonable this dissolution of the nominal Church system may seem to some, the Lord will "bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." (Isa. 28:21,22.)

There has come to be so much "vain worship," because "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men," (Matt. 15:9), that the removal of the "candle-stick out of his place," has become a necessity. (Rev. 2:5.) "The light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee." (Rev. 18:23.)

Who are they that get uneasy in the churches? Are they those who do not study their Bibles much? Mind, we say study; not look over the S.S. lesson and prepare one's self to answer the geographical and historical questions, but who wish to know what is "between the lines," and "under the letter." Are not the uneasy "troublers of Israel" the ones who "inquire and search diligently"? "Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them (the prophets) did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow"?

Is it not plain enough to all of us, that anyone who, in the Church, shall persistently [R591 : page 5] make such inquiries will be reproved for "prying into things which are not for us to know"? Now it is not for us to tell individuals what is their personal duty. It is our place to speak of principles in their general application and each must judge about the particular application to himself. Jesus spoke very plainly about the condition of the Jewish Church in that time, and of a certain class, but seldom or never of any one

individual in it. His condemnation was of corrupt principles and corrupt classes, and was in public.

He says concerning his teaching, "In secret have I said nothing." (John 18:20.) But why should Jesus, or we, condemn the Church, either Jewish or Christian? Did not God institute the Jewish Church? Yes, and for a purpose. That purpose was to shadow forth, through the law, which was committed unto them, "good things to come"; for they "could never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect: for then would they not have ceased to be offered ...for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb. 10:1,2,4.) "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience." Heb. 9:8.

But there came a time when the Jewish Church should have known that its mission in that particular phase was ended; but, owing to its pride, love of self, having an imposing ceremonial service and love of the "applause of men," it overlooked God's purposes, and "knew not the time" of its "visitation," and Jesus, in sorrow, said, "If thou hadst known, even THOU (mark well the words, "even THOU") at LEAST in this THY DAY, the things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke 19:42,44.

The nominal Christian Church, instituted by Jesus, is in a similar condition of unconsciousness regarding the time of her visitation, and for similar reasons.

She has purposes of her own, and thinks, or supposes they are God's purposes, **[R591 : page 6]** but so intent is she upon self-aggrandizement, that she cares not to review the lessons of the great

teacher, lest she should be under the necessity of modifying her views, and that would wound her pride. SHE modify her views!! Is she not infallible? "As is the mother, so are the daughters."

Undutiful children, they speak lightly to the gay world of the egotistic assumptions of their aged mother, while their assumptions are in some respects greater and fully as absurd.

They are not slow to speak of a certain aged woman as a "mother of harlots," while everybody knows that that same old lady is their mother. The same record that tells us of the disreputable character of the aged matron, gives us no intimation that she had any daughters of a different character. And while they are thus traducing the character of their mother and expatiating upon their own purity, the gay world turns its face aside to avoid the corrupt breath, and takes a furtive glance at the scanty garments that scarce hide the shame of their nakedness. (See Rev. 3:18.)

Some may say as they read these lines, "O what bitterness and hate of the Church," to which we answer: not at all: far from it. We are saying, in the same way, in the same spirit, and for the same purpose, that which the Spirit said through John "unto the churches." In fact, we believe the same Spirit prompts us to repeat the same things, and though plain and straight, they are in love. Rev. 3:19,20,21,22.

The same "head of the corner" is present and being "rejected" by the builders now, that was rejected by the builders before. To be sure, they did not know that they were rejecting Him, (Luke 23:34) but they did not want to know. They "desired none of his ways." If anyone who is still in fellowship with any of the "daughters" referred to, and are becoming aware of "the presence" of him in whom their "soul delighteth," think we are in error about the churches rejecting him, just let them announce that he is present, "at the door"; let them offer to "open the door," and their uncertainty

will soon vanish. They will soon discover not only what is duty, but what is necessity, for they would have to hold their peace or change their relation, that is, if the fact is an example for the future.

The question, "What is my duty?" resolves itself into this: Do I love more the one who stands at the door knocking, or the Church who is refusing him admission, and who is saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink and to be drunken?" "The lord of that servant will come (HEKO, BE HERE) [will have come. Rotherham's trans.] in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not AWARE." (Luke 12:45,46.)

The drunkenness referred to is of the spirit and mind, and its effects are described in Isaiah 29:9-16.

However "the Church" may question "the presence" of Christ, if you who are inquiring as to duty have studied the Old and New Testament prophecies carefully, you have a strong conviction of what is truth.

You understand that the word come in Matt. 23:36; 24:14; 24:50; Luke 12:46; Heb. 10:37; Rev. 3:3, and some others, is in the Greek heko, and signifies "to have come, be here," not future tense, but present. And in Matt. 24:3, "Parousia, a being alongside, presence.

What shall be the sign of thy coming (presence.) "WHERE is the promise of his coming?" (presence.) This very inquiry, prophetically given by Peter (2 Peter 3:4), is most literally fulfilled; almost the exact words being used by those who sneer at his presence.

They see no evidence of his presence; "all things continue as they were." They profess to be spiritually-minded, but reason

according to the fleshly mind. Professing spiritual sight, they reason (?) about seeing Jesus with their physical sight.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Do not imagine that the winter is over, because we have had some cold weather (do not forget that we are speaking of spiritual things); for be ye assured it is just coming on; and though you may have put off "your flight," yet the longer you defer it, the harder it will be for you.

One of the greatest trials will be the desire, augmented by the exhortation, to look after spiritual children (proselytes to "the Church"); but Jesus said, "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. A failure to observe God's orderly method brings disaster, even if it is a desire to make a nice sacrifice to him. See Sam. 15:15-17,22, "To obey is better than sacrifice."

Our choice was, that as he could not come in, we would "go out to meet him," for we loved him best. It cost us a hard struggle, but it was a struggle once for all, and we have not seen an hour in which we would undo it if we could. How much we see now in connection with him, which we never could have seen but for nearness to him. We had no ill-will for any individual in "the Church," and that made it all the harder. But "the Church" was "making the Word of God of no effect" through their tradition, and we knew it. Should we stay, and by staying say to the world that we endorsed its teaching?

In conclusion we would say to any who are inquiring, "What is my duty?" that if you believe "the Church" is teaching "present truth," and is approved of the Lord, we would advise you to remain in it; for under such circumstances you would be as well in it as out of it, and temporally, probably better. If you belong to the Church in spirit, there is no reason for leaving it. It all depends upon which

life you are most desirous to save. If you desire, above all things, to save your present social and ecclesiastical life, including reputation, then by all means stay where you are, for that is the way to do it (Matt. 16:25), but should you count these as Paul did, "but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," you must expect to have your name cast out as evil, but with this will be connected a blessing. (Matt. 16:22.) Then you can fulfill, as we do, the following verse, 23d.

In connection with this subject let us study carefully the 18th chapter of Revelations, with parallel Scriptures, and see that we get an understanding of them. "After these things." (1st verse.) What things? After all the things related up to that point had been accomplished. Now, study the whole chapter, and be sure to get the "mind of the Spirit." But should some one say to you, "There is no use studying Revelation, no one understands that; there is no use reading it," then read to them the third verse of the first chapter of the book, and tell them that by the grace of God you will at least TRY to get an understanding of it, for you are after that blessing.

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