

"THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION"

"Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." – Revelation 3:10.

OUR Lord's words addressed "to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia," had their fulfilment, we understand, during the period which closed somewhere about the time when the Harvest of this Age began. We are not to think of the different epochs represented in the messages to the various Churches as being exact periods, as though there was a particular instant of beginning and a particular instant of closing. Rather we are to understand each to be a general period, which laps over the one on the other. So this period of faithfulness to the Lord's Word of which our text treats seems to have been one of some length, just as this Laodicean period in which we live has covered a considerable time, but is nearly ended now, we think.

For a long time God's Word was lightly esteemed. The transition from a poor understanding to a better understanding of it came on gradually. The Two Witnesses of God, the Old and New Testaments, long clothed in the sackcloth of the dead languages, gradually ascended to heaven, the place of honor and power, as the Scriptures symbolically represent the matter. (Revelation 11:3-12.) Then came the general announcement that the time of the Second Advent of Christ had come. This was sometimes called the Wolff Movement and sometimes the Miller Movement; for one was the leader in one part of the world, and the other in the other part. America at this time was representative of the advanced thought of the world. This proclamation of the Kingdom of Christ was a remarkable movement, which we believe is referred to by our Lord in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, who awoke and trimmed their lamps. But it was a false alarm. The Bridegroom did not come.

DISAPPOINTMENT OF MILLER MOVEMENT A SIFTING

This disappointment caused a sifting among the professed people of God. Some became all the more interested in the Bible as the Word of God, and did not doubt, while others became haughty and skeptical, and declared that the Bible was a foolish old book, that anybody who paid any attention to these prophecies must be soft in the head, etc. So these did not keep to the Word of God, but discarded its declarations. The promises and prophecies of the Bible relating to the Master's Second Coming, though *positive* and *numerous*, were abandoned by most of the great teachers. Consequently the people knew very little about the Bible. Of course their *faith* could not be much greater than their *knowledge*.

As a result the work of the Miller Movement was a sort of separation, as between those who kept the Word of God with patience and those who lost their faith in His Word. This persistent, patient faith of the true saints of God is what we think is referred to here by keeping "the word of My patience." The general hour of temptation, therefore, would not come upon them, but upon those who came after them – the Laodicean Church. The Philadelphia Church, which had patiently passed through so severe a trial of their faith, would not be subjected to the later test.

"The hour of temptation" has come upon us now. This hour of temptation has been the Harvest time. In many respects it has tested the Lord's people, and has proven who are faithful to the Word of God and who are not faithful to it. Hence the majority of the professing Christians of the world – probably more than three-fourths – have lost all faith in the Bible, and have fallen into the various false and delusive theories of our day – Evolution, Higher Criticism, Christian Science, Theosophy, Spiritism, New Thought,

etc. They have fallen from faith, from loyalty to the Lord's Word. They are not able to stand in this "evil day."

FALL OF FAITH FOR A TIME

The trials of this "evil Day" do not *end* with the *Church*, "with the House of God" – though they *begin* there. The hour of temptation was to "come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth." The temptation, the trial, is going out amongst the people of every nation, especially to all parts of Christendom. In the severe experiences through which many have passed, they have been led to doubt the very existence of God. They cannot conceive of a God who would allow such terrible calamities as have already come, and who will allow the yet greater calamities which the thoughtful see are still to come! Not knowing God's great Plan, not seeing the glorious outcome of present conditions, the golden lining to the dark cloud now settling down upon the whole world, people will lose all confidence in a Supreme Government. Poor humanity in their ignorance and blindness have not been enlightened through the Word of God, have not known of the coming Kingdom and the method by which it will be inaugurated and the purpose and object of its inauguration.

So the present crisis is surely a time of great trial upon the whole world. Many of these have constituted a nominal Church; and in this period of testing and shaking all church systems will go completely to pieces. Babylon will fall; for she is neither able nor worthy to stand in this great Trial Day. And great will be her fall! It will mean for a little time the general destruction of faith – the *fall* of faith, we think. This seems to be the meaning of the prophecy, "For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act." (Isaiah 28:21.) **[R5718 : page 200]** Those not having understood, not having given heed to the Word, will be entirely disconcerted.

THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH SPARED

As to the Philadelphia stage of the Church, and their being saved from the hour of temptation, we think possibly the Lord meant that some of the Church of that epoch would live over into the present period, and that they would not be subjected to the special trials of this hour. For instance, we think of a very fine old gentleman, who was about ninety years of age at the time we are about to mention. He was pastor of a Church. He seemed to receive Present Truth with a great deal of joy and spoke it forth with much zeal. But he was surrounded with so much opposition at home, and in the church to which he was attached as a minister, that he could not seem to trust to his mental judgment. He apparently thought to himself, "I am about ninety years of age. I cannot trust the reliability of my own judgment. Even if I go on the street I need some one to take my arm, or I theirs, lest I run into something. If I were sure that this is the Lord's will, I would be willing to endure any amount of opposition. But I am not sure."

We have sometimes thought of that old gentleman as perhaps a representative of a large class, and we have considerable sympathy for him in that he was not able to take his stand and come out of Babylon. This Scripture which we are considering has rather comforted our mind with respect to him and others like him. These seemed to prove loyal to the Lord's Word, and faithful to the extent of their ability to understand. Probably any of these coming over into the Harvest time would not be counted in as of the Harvest period. We are not, of course, certain of this. We only know that the Lord promised those of the Philadelphia period that they should be spared the trials now upon the Laodicean phase of the Church and upon the world.

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