

„A STONE OF STUMBLING”

„He (Jesus) shall be ... for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.” Isa. 8:14

The Bible speaks of the several tribes of Israel as houses—viz.: House of Judah, Levi, Benjamin, etc., but the expression, House of Israel, was used as belonging to the twelve tribes collectively. (Jacob, after his wrestle with the angel, was called *Israel*, which signifies „a Prince with God,” and all of his descendants are called the children or House of Israel.) And the nominal Gospel church, entire, containing both wheat and tares (Matt. 13) is recognized as the House of Christ who is the true Israel—a Prince with God.

It is these two houses that we understand as referred to in the scripture above cited—the fleshly house of servants and the spiritual house of sons—as we read: „Moses verily was faithful in all his house [of servants—fleshly Israel], but Christ as a Son over his own house [of sons—spiritual Israel] whose house are we [to be] if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end. [Heb. 3:5,6.] We see then that none are of the *Gospel House of Sons*, except those who „hold fast to the end.” But during this age of trial and development, all professors are reckoned as part of the *nominal house of sons*, and the distinction between the true and false are not to be manifested until the end of this age—“The harvest”—when wheat and tares are separated.

This fact, that both of the nominal houses—fleshly and spiritual Israel—stumble over Christ, may have escaped the notice of many, and the bare suggestion that the Gospel Church is to stumble will doubtless be repelled by many with alarm. But, beloved, be not alarmed; remember that „the Lord knoweth them that are his,” and not one grain of wheat will be mistaken for a tare; nor will one tare be gathered into the barn of safety with the wheat. Were we to do the separating, very many tares who have been our neighbors and church members might be classed as wheat that will be known in their true character by the angels who are the reapers.

The Jewish church claimed that they were *servants of God*, and so they had been reckoned a house of servants for eighteen hundred years, up to the time when Jesus came in the end of their age as the *reaper*, and the work of separating between true grain and empty chaff commenced. The work of reaping was done by Jesus’ personal preaching, and also through his disciples, as John

had declared. „His” winnowing fan is in his hand, and *he will* thoroughly purge [cleanse] his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner [the gospel age,] but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,” [Matt. 3:12] the fire of tribulation and national destruction on fleshly Israel, ending with Jerusalem’s destruction—A.D. 70.

The work of Jesus in the end or harvest of the Jewish age, was, not to make Israelites of the Gentiles, but to prove who were really *servants of God*. The results prove that *few* of the nominal fleshly Israel were „Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile.” „He came to [nominally] His own, and as a people or *house* they received him not.” The nominal house stumbled over him, and did not recognize him. „But to as many as received him, to them gave he power [liberty] to become *sons of God*,”—but the rest were blinded.

We have heretofore seen that the Jewish or servant house was in many respects a pattern or shadow of the higher *gospel* house. Especially in the closing work of the two ages is this parallelism striking. Their age ended with a harvest, in which *Jesus in the flesh* was the reaper and winnowing and gatherer into the barn, the disciples being the assistant reapers, working under his directions. [Luke 10:1.] Our age is also to end with the harvest of the spiritual or gospel house—a separating of wheat and tares, in which again, *Jesus a spiritual body* [„We know him no more after the flesh”] is the reaper, [Rev. 14:14-16, Matt. 13:41] while the angels, also invisible spiritual bodies, are the assistants.

We see too that not only are the harvests of Jewish and gospel ages parallel in point of beginning, but also in length of duration; theirs being in all 40 years from the time of Jesus anointing [at beginning of their harvest, A.D. 30,] to destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. So, ours, beginning in 1874 closes with the end of the „day of wrath” and end of the „times of the Gentiles,” 1914—a similar and parallel period of 40 years. The first seven years of the Jewish harvest was especially devoted to the gathering of ripe wheat from that church; three and one-half of it was while he was present as the Bridegroom and three and a half of it after he had come to them as king and had entered into glory, but it was all under his supervision and direction.

As John had said, he purged his floor, gathered his wheat and burned the chaff. So here the parallel is being fulfilled: We find, [as heretofore shown—see „Day Dawn”] *the law and the prophets* declaring him present at the culmination of the „Jubilee cycles” in 1874. And the parallels show us that then the *harvest* began, and that the gathering of the Bride into the place of safety, will occupy a parallel seven years of time, ending in 1881. But how, when, and why did the „house of servants” stumble over Christ? If we can ascertain this it should give us a clue to how, when, and why, the Gospel house stumbles, especially in view of the fact that in so many particulars the closing work of that age is the *exact pattern* of this.

We suggest that the fleshly *house* could not stumble over Christ until he had come and was *present* among them. They stumbled because of the *manner* of Christ's coming. They had expected Him to manifest himself in such a manner as would be convincing to their *natural eye* and senses, and not require the exercise of *faith*. He came in such an obscure and humble manner as to appeal *only* to the *eye of faith*, and taught in such a manner that only those who had the hearing of faith received his witness. „Who hath *ears* to hear let him hear.” Matt. 13:9.

The object of his so appealing to the *eye and ear of faith* was, that none but such as had these should receive Him, and that the others „who sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law,” (professedly Israelites, but not Israelites indeed) should *stumble*, not recognize him as the Son of God, but fulfill what had been prophesied of them, and crucify him. We thus see how, when and why the fleshly house stumbled. (Rom. 9:32-33.)

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Now, let us look with even deeper interest to the stumbling of the nominal Gospel house—spiritual Israel. We suggest that as the fleshly house could not stumble over Him until he came at the first advent, so the spiritual house cannot stumble over Christ until His second advent. The causes of stumbling too are the same; those of the Gospel church who expect the second coming of Christ and establishment of his kingdom are expecting (just as the fleshly house did) an outward display, which will appeal to the natural eye, ear, and human senses generally.

Some know not, and others who ought to know experimentally, seem to forget, that if we are in Christ Jesus we are *new creatures*. „*Ye are not in the flesh*, but in the spirit (condition) if so be that the spirit of Christ dwell in you.” (Rom. 8:9.) All of this class of persons have given up—reckoned dead, (and are daily dying to) the fleshly human nature, and are daily partaking more and more of the spiritual or divine nature, into the *perfection of which* we are expecting soon to be changed, when the separating of „the harvest” is complete. These should all remember the rule which we apply to other things. viz. „We look not at the things which are seen (of the natural eye), but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Cor. 4:18.) Which of the things which we as new creatures prize so highly are visible to the natural eye? None; it was by the *eye of faith* that we realized our heavenly Father's smile, saw Jesus as our Leader, saw the „crown of life,” and „prize of our high calling.” Our spiritual eye of faith has seen, and our circumcised ears heard of the glorious things „God hath in reservation for them that love Him,” which the natural man cannot see and hear, because they are *spiritually discerned*.” (1 Cor. 2:14.) We see and hear, because led by the Spirit (through the word.) „We walk by *faith*, and not by [natural] *sight*.”

Would that all could realize that this class described [dead to the natural, but alive spiritually] are

the only ones who will constitute *the body or bride* of Christ. These have fulfilled their covenant by sacrificing the human nature. „They shall be mine ... in that day when I make up my jewels.” [Mal. 3:17.] It is to *this class only* that Jesus comes as Head and Bridegroom, and only they are to

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recognize His presence during the harvest of this age, as only those with the eye and ear of faith recognized Jesus in the harvest of the fleshly house. [True, there will be in due time outward manifestations of „Power and great glory,” which will convince all mankind of the reality of the new kingdom; but this comes after the *bride* has recognized his presence, been separated from the *tares*, and „made like unto Christ’s glorious body,” for „when he shall appear [to the world] we also shall *appear with him* in glory.” We will not be revealed *in flesh*, but in glory. „We shall be revealed [made known] in flaming fire,” [judgments] inflicting righteous punishment upon wrong doers, and lifting up the poor and oppressed.

We believe that Christ is now present, in the sense of having commenced the work of taking to himself His great power and reigning. The work begins with the separating of tares from wheat in the living church and the association of the wheat of all ages with Himself in the authority of His kingdom. „To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne,” and „to him will I give power over the nations,” to continue until all things are subdued under Him. It seems proper, too, that the work should begin thus, by taking his bride and the twain becoming one.

It must be painfully evident to all true Christians that the nominal church which calls herself the spouse of Christ, is far from being the „little flock” who walk the narrow way—“the way their Leader trod.” Many are Christians in name and form only, „having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof,” by living contrary to their professions. Many are *moralists only*, who recognize and use the church only as a social and moral club. Many are hypocrites, who use the church as a stepping-stone to wealth and social standing. Some are true children of God and feel that the church is too empty and formal and worldly, yet are carried on with the others by the thought that they may be too timid. Mr. A. and Mrs. C. are very intelligent and wealthy and moral people and they approve of such things, and who am I that I should object? They would think me weak and fanatical—I will continue with them; certainly much good is being done.

A few—a little flock—while still using their influence and example as „living epistles” for their Master, feel themselves almost, or entirely, separated from the nominal church. The church’s union with the world in worldly plans, ways, customs and dress are out of harmony with their new nature, and their seeking to be „not conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds” to harmony with the will of God; they cannot feel at home with the carnally minded. Their eye delights not so much in beauty of form, as in the perfection of the new nature, begotten

of God through the word of truth; not so much in the beauty of dress as in the beauty of character and its Christ-like-ness; not so much in the grandeur of the house as in the greatness and loveliness of Him whom they „worship in spirit and in truth;” not so much at the language and eloquence of the preacher as in the understanding of the word of God.

These go sometimes to meet with the nominal church, but are always separate in spirit and usually seek and enjoy more the society of others like-minded. These are obliged to study the word privately, for if they do attend preaching they hear a sermon on some topic of morality directed to *the world* of unbelievers. Nor can the pastor be blamed entirely for so doing, the policy of the church having supplied him a congregation, nine-tenths of which are worldly and cannot understand spiritual things, he feels it to be his duty to preach to the majority; consequently the sheep of the flock receive little or none of the „strong meat” of the *word*. Will these starve, think you? I tell you, nay; the great Shepherd will provide „meat in due season” to all who *really* hunger and thirst after it, He will lead them to green pastures.

This last class is to be the bride. Careless of the opinions, smiles or frowns of the world, she cares only to be in favor with her beloved—the heavenly bridegroom. And *these* are to recognize him now, the others are to stumble and not recognize Him until these have all gone in to the marriage and the door to that high position is closed. Our understanding is that the Bridegroom came in 1874; and this little company is being brought to a knowledge of his presence, and in that sense, being separated from other true Christians who either are overcharged with the affairs of this world or bound by chains of denominationalism, are making void the word of God through their traditions, etc., and still others, who, not being in condition of heart to receive Him on the evidence of His word, but who turn to seek light on His presence in other directions and find it not until the door to that high calling is shut. Matt. 25:10.

We trust, then, that all readers may see that the reason why the Church in general stumbles here, (as the fleshly house did,) is because only a „little flock” *in it* is the bride. The two houses of Israel each in turn were called to be Christ’s bride. Both fail to attain the position, but as God had foreseen and arranged, a little company from each do receive Him, and „As many as receive Him” are acceptable. The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (by their own condition). Rom. 11:7.

The pathway in which the little flock walk, though rugged and difficult, is filled with light—”Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a lantern to my footsteps.” And it is this light which prevents us from stumbling over this *stone of stumbling*. The prophetic word shows us that we are in „the day of the Lord,” and enables us to receive Him, not by the sight of the natural eye, but by the eye of faith, for „we walk by *faith*, not by sight.” This is just as Peter advised us: We have a sure word of

prophecy, unto which ye do well to take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place. [2 Pet. 1:19.] The day of the Lord is called a day of darkness, and we, unless enlightened by the word of prophecy, would stumble as the others of the Church are doing over the *stone of stumbling* in this dark place. But enlightened by our *lamp*, how our hearts have been rejoiced since we found him present, and though a stone of stumbling to others, „To you, who believe, He is precious.” 1 Pet. 2:7.

THE DAY OF VISITATION

When Jesus had finished His ministry He rode to Jerusalem on the ass, assuming [typically] to the fleshly house the office of king, and in the exercise of that office he declared: „Your house is left unto you desolate”—here giving up the fleshly house. We repeat that they were given up because, not being Israelites indeed, they did not receive Him—stumbled—and so we read that when He had told them of their overthrow and destruction He assigns as the cause—“Because thou knewest not the *time of thy visitation*.” [Luke 19:41-44.] Their time of visitation was, in a sense, the whole forty years to the destruction of the nation; but there had been the time of trial first; if during that first three and a-half years they had been in a condition to receive Jesus, the visitation following would have been of blessing, but unready and rejecting him, it became a visitation of wrath.

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So also here, during the first three and a-half years, from 1874 to 1878, the opportunity was given to the general Gospel Church to receive Christ *the present one*, but they stumbled similarly to the fleshly house. Because they knew not the time of their visitation—being unready—and are similarly cast off—given over to destruction (as an institution)—a visitation of wrath.

After the giving up of the fleshly house, especially during the three and a half years following, or the last half of their covenant week [the 70th, Dan. 9:24], favor was still shown to all who left it and accepted of the fact that Jesus Christ *had come*, etc.; so here there will be special favor shown to all who separate in heart from the cast-off Church, and receive the *presence* of the Lord during the three and a half years from 1878 to 1881, and after that to those who become part of „the great company,” for some shall glorify God in this „day of visitation and wrath.” [1 Pet. 2:12.]

The number of Scriptures which speak of the Gospel Church after being cast off from God’s favor, and of her rapid decline and fall are somewhat wonderful. In Rev. 3:14 to 21, the whole picture is vividly presented. The Lord is addressing the *last phase* of the Church, the seventh. [We in common, with nearly all expositors of the Apocalypse, understand the seven Churches here addressed to represent seven phases or conditions of the entire nominal Church, from the days of the apostles to the end of the Gospel age, in the order mentioned.] To this seventh Church, Jesus

says: „I know thy works,” [the works are greater far than the faith] „that thou art neither cold nor hot; so, then, because thou art lukewarm I will spew thee out of My mouth.” What a description this is of the present condition of her, whom God calls „Babylon”—confusion—mixture—lukewarm.

Babylon says she is „rich, increased in goods and has need of nothing;” that she is in a more prosperous condition than ever before, and she boasts of fine churches, high steeples, eloquent preachers, wealthy members, splendid music, large salaries and worldly popularity, and knows not that she is „poor and miserable and blind,” (stumbling over present truths) and remembers not that her worldly popularity is an evidence of her disfavor with the Bridegroom. „For the friendship of the world is enmity against God.” She is therefore given up, as was the fleshly house—she is „spewed out of His mouth.” She has been His mouthpiece, and through her He has spoken to the world, but it shall be so no longer. „The voice of the Bridegroom and the Bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.” Rev. 18:23.

To our understanding this „spewing” and „falling” dates from 1878, the exact parallel of time to the giving and „leaving desolate” of the fleshly house. And now the call is „Come out of her, my people! that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive not of her plagues,” and while we expect that most of the second company will not be freed from her bondage until afterward, we do expect that all who constitute part of the bride will be separated before the Autumn of 1881, then „the voice of the *Bride* will no more be heard in her.”

The fall of Babylon is not only the subject of a large portion of the book of *Revelation*, but also of many of the prophecies. As fleshly Israel went into captivity to literal Babylon, so did the Gospel house go into captivity to „Babylon, the great mother of harlots,” and is still bound by many of her chains of darkness and error. In prophecy when depicting the desolations, etc., coming upon Babylon, we understand it to refer to both the type and the antitype, and especially to the latter, and they harmonize wonderfully with the account given of the same event in Rev. 12:13,16-19.

While there are many such prophecies, we merely refer to one; Jer. 50 and 51. „How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken? How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations? ... Woe unto them, for their day is come and the time of their visitation. The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon to declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of His temple ... and the most proud shall *stumble* and fall and none shall raise Him up. ... At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved and the cry is heard among the nations. ... Flee out of the midst of Babylon and deliver every man his soul (life); be not cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of the Lord’s vengeance; He will render unto her a recompense. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand that made all the earth drunken. ... We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; forsake her and let us go, every man,

into his own country. ... The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness; come, let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God." (51:10.) „In those days and at that time," saith the Lord, „the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." (50:20.) This last text shows us that the time *really meant* by the prophesy was not at the deliverance of Israel from literal Babylon (though type and antitype are closely interwoven), but at the end of this age, when, says Paul: God shall „take away their sins." (Read Rom. 11:25-27.)

After telling the nominal church that she is no longer his mouthpiece, Jesus says: „Be zealous therefore and repent." This is his message to the nominal church as a whole; but now he recognizes some who are in, but not of Babylon—

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individuals, and to these he says: „Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It is not at the door of the sinner's heart the Lord stands thus knocking, as some have supposed, but at the hearts of the *true Israelites*, in this seventh or closing stage of the Gospel church. And what a wonderfully clear picture this affords us—the two things occur at the same time, *i.e.*, while the one party is „stumbling" and being „spewed out," the other party, the „little flock," „the overcomers," are being made aware of his presence. These hear his knock—the prophecies which announce him as *present*, not as coming in the future, but *present now*.

When any one knocks at your door, it is an indication, not that they *will* come, but that they have come. So the Lord has given us a striking picture, illustrative of His presence at the time Babylon is given up. Since we each individually heard the knock of the Prophecies, opened our heart and realized his presence, how fully his promise has been fulfilled, „I will come in ... and sup with him, and he with me." What a blessed feasting on the truth we have enjoyed. Ah, yes, when our Lord girds Himself and comes forth to serve us, as he has done during these years, we get *food* indeed. We have meat to eat that the *world* knoweth not of, a parallel again to those true Israelites who received him at his first advent. „The disciples came unto him privately, saying, *explain unto us,*" and Jesus answers: „To *you* it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to all them that are without (unbelievers) all these things are done in parables" (figures of speech which they cannot understand.) „Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which

ye see, and have not seen them.” (Matt. 13:17.) And the same is true of those who see him

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present now by the *eye of faith*—by the light of the sure word of prophecy—“blessed are your eyes.”

While all overcomers—the Bride—are to get the victory, etc., and not fall with Babylon, yet from other scriptures we find that some who are really children of God, will fall with her. „Many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken.” (Isa. 8:15.) But (Psa. 37:24) „though he fall yet shall he

NOT BE UTTERLY CAST DOWN”

The stumbling and fall of both the houses of Israel should be regarded rather as a blessing than otherwise, as the prophet has said: „This child (Jesus) is set for the fall and rising again of *many* in Israel”—both houses. The rejection of the nominal house was necessary before the call could go „to the Gentiles to take out a people (Bride) for his name.” For, „through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles.” (Rom. 11:11.) And though the fleshly house fell, they are to rise again to all that was promised them as a fleshly *seed of Abraham*, (in the Millennial age.) Then, why should any complain? „If the fall of them be the riches of the world,” or resulted in throwing open to the world in general the opportunity of running the race for „the prize of high calling”—to be the „Bride, the Lamb’s wife?” And „what shall the receiving of them [back to favor as God’s people] be but life from the dead”—resurrection.—[Rom. 11:12.]

So with the stumbling and fall of the second house. It is necessary that the nominal church should fall in order that the true might be manifested—separated and „enter into the joys of her Lord.” But while the fleshly house shall be restored, the Babylon church will never be restored. As a great millstone cast into the sea, so shall Babylon fall, and be found no more. [Rev. 18:21.] While this is true especially of the mother of harlots; it is true also of all her daughters who partake of her nature, and only *individuals* out of Babylon shall arise from among her ashes, saying: „True and righteous are His judgments for he hath judged the great harlot.” „Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” And they will thus „glorify God in the day of visitation.” [1 Pet. 12:12.]

But let *us* „walk in his footsteps”—“the path of the just” [Righteous] and, enlightened and illumined by the word, realizing the presence of

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our Lord, glorify God without having to go into the wrath. „Watch ye that ye may be accounted worthy,” [clothed with his righteousness, „unspotted from the world”] to escape all those things coming upon the world, and stand before the Son of Man.” Let us remember that the ‚little flock’ have always been—the church „whose names are written in heaven,” though during the gospel age the number has seemed much larger, by reason of tares. And though you may have little of earthly communion with saints, remember to keep up your relationship and union with the head of the church—Christ.

As at the first advent some of the people would have believed if the Pharisees had received Him, and it was asked, „Have any of the Scribes or Pharisees believed on him?” So now many say if the Lord is *present* why do not the leading preachers of the churches believe it? We cannot risk our judgment as to the meaning of the word as against theirs. Of the leaders of that church Jesus said: „Can the blind lead the blind; shall they not both fall?” (Luke 6:39.) They did; both leaders and masses *stumbled and fell*. So too Jesus says of the nominal church here, Thou knowest not that thou art poor and blind. And again, for the same reasons, many stumble and fall.

Let us remember, dear friends, that the great Teacher and Leader of the flock is Christ. The guide unto truth is the Spirit of truth through the word, and if any man teach, you are required to square and measure his teachings, by going „to the law and to the testimony, If they speak not according to these it is because there is no light in them.” (Isa. 8:20.) As children of the light, let us walk in the light, and be sanctified and separated from both the world and a worldly church.

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— January, 1881 —