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FLEE BEFORE WINTER

The above subject (Luke 17:31) is found with other connections in Matt. 24:17-21, viz: “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house ... and woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in *those days!* But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter (neither on the Sabbath day) for *then* shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be.”

This has been very generally applied as having its fulfillment with the Jews, after *their house* was given up and at its destruction, which followed the end of its seven years of favor. We believe that they did have a fulfillment there, but that they apply to the end of *this age* especially—in fact as we have seen, everything which occurred to them during their harvest was a *shadow* of what occurs now during *this* harvest. To the Jew, it was literally fulfilled; they fled from literal Zion, left literal housetops, fields, beds and mills, and Josephus tells us that mothers ate their own offspring in *those days*.

But we are looking for the *substance* there shadowed; we have found the meaning of the “bed” and of the “*grinding mills*” and of the “*house-top*,” and now let us see who in Zion are they that give suck and are with child in these days. We suggest that Paul and Peter and Isaiah tell us who the children are. Written to new converts, we read: “As new-born *babes*, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.” (1 Pet. 2:2.) Again, written to those who made slow progress in divine grace and knowledge, we read: “I have fed you with milk and not with meat—even as unto *babes*.” (1 Cor. 3:2), “for when for the time ye ought to be teachers [suck givers] ye have need that one teach you again, which be the *first principles* [milk] of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of *milk*, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth *milk* [first principles *only*] is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a *babe*. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [*men*—it is when grown to this full age and size of manhood in Christ, that the *bed* is found too short—that a *man* cannot stretch himself on it] even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised.” Heb. 5:12.

In Isa. 28:9 we read: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine [the deeper elements of his Word and plan]? Them that are weaned from the *milk* and drawn from the breasts.”

The nominal church to-day is composed largely of those who give no evidence whatever of being begotten of the Spirit—consequently are not even (embryo) babes in Christ, and have neither part

nor lot in spiritual things; and of those who are spirit-begotten, how few have reached any degree of growth—how few are *men*—nearly all are *babes* in Christ. We love babes—new-born

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babes especially, but we feel disappointed, and disposed to chide them (as Paul did), when for the time they ought to be teachers and still have need that one teach them the first principles. They themselves are much to blame that they are “unskillful in the *Word*,” for the strength comes “by reason of *use*.” We should not confound these *babes* with the class referred to as *babes* by Jesus, unto whom he says God reveals his plans, hidden from the prudent. There is a sense in which we always should be *babes*—in meekness and simplicity; we should always be Christ’s “little ones.” Paul defines the distinction between the two classes of babes in 1 Cor. 14:20.

If now we have found that nearly all the true Christians of to-day (like the Corinthian church of Paul’s day) are babes not weaned from the milk, but still needing it, who shall we suppose to be those who give suck in these days? We answer, they are the ministers, class leaders, and Bible class teachers of the church. They almost all boast of giving only first principles—milk; and they seek by all means to prevent those in their charge from wandering off and getting even a morsel of *meat*—from hearing anything which would cause their “*senses*” to be exercised.

As we progress into the time of the church’s trouble, (Zion’s travail) when truth and error are both attacking her and causing her pain, until all of God’s true children are delivered out of her—the brunt and severity of anguish will come mostly upon those that “give suck.” They will find (and even now are beginning to be alarmed) that not only will the babes cease to come into her, but many (yes, ultimately *all*) of those now being fed with milk will be weaned and learn to eat meat or die of starvation. “It shall be for a vexation *only until* He shall make you to understand doctrine”—or to eat *meat*. Isa. 28:19, margin.

One day is with the Lord as a thousand years. (2 Pet. 3:8.) The seventh thousand (or Sabbath—“the seventh day is the Sabbath”) commenced in 1873, consequently we are now in the Sabbath day of our text: Pray (desire) that your flight be not on the Sabbath. The Jewish law placed restrictions upon the people on the Sabbath, and hindered them from journeying as much as they might desire—therefore, if bound by those laws it hindered flight. How is it now? Is there any special hindrance to escape from nominal Zion since we entered the seventh day? We answer, Yes; those who stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and were not entangled by any yoke of bondage or creed of men, were in a favored position—those who get weaned now and eat the strong meat of present truth (See Matt. 24:45,46—which shows that “meat in *due season*” will be given when the Lord shall have come and is *present*), and hear the Lord’s word, saying: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive

not of her plagues.” If they now attempt to obey they will find such *laws in force in Zion* as will make it difficult to get out *quickly* unless those *man-made laws* are disregarded.

During the last seven years nominal Zion has sought by every means to prevent escape from her *house*; it is easy, very easy, for almost any sort of creature to gain admittance, but vile indeed must be the one she casts out; but be you ever so faithful a child of God, and attempt to go forth in obedience to His *call*, you will find your way wondrously hedged up, and unless your *senses* have been exercised—unless God has taught you knowledge and made you to understand true doctrines, you will be unable to make your escape. You will first be fawned upon, told how indispensable are your services, how much good you are doing, how you would be throwing away all your Christian *influence*, how you would lose your social standing, etc. You will also be reminded of the extent of learning (worldly wisdom) of the church and her ministers, of the comparatively few “peculiar people” who hold these views, etc. And, unless you have had your spiritual senses exercised in the Word [not by merely reading, but by *searching*] you will be unable to force your way against these barriers. Unless possessed of a knowledge of the Word you will be unable to test their ministers by the evidences of *heavenly wisdom*—the understanding of God’s Word, as shown in Isa. 29:10-14. You will be unable to prove whether or not they are the Lord’s friends by the tests of John 15:15, and 16:13. Unless you have laid all on the altar, you cannot break away from the *social ties* and flattering influences; but if you have you can say: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Yes, you must say:

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only Thee.”

And not only say, but *do it*. You will be severely tested, for if you have been *blameless* before, an example in conduct, and *insist* on withdrawing, your character will be carefully examined, and if possible some pretext will be found to let you down and out—*as though* you had been expelled.

But we read: “Pray that your flight be not in *winter*.” How shall we understand this? We believe that we are now in the “harvest,” that it is composed of two parts, or as shown in Rev. 14:14-18, *two* harvests. The first seven years of gathering the “first fruits of the wheat” and a succeeding period of (33 years) harvesting of the “*Vine of the Earth*.” The first a time of favor, the latter a “time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation.” It is with reference to this first (7 years) harvest (which ends we believe in Oct. this year,) that we understand all reference and exhortation to the Bride or “little flock” stands related: it is her harvest time and if we rightly interpret the Word all who will have part in that company and be overcomers will come out of

“Babylon” before *this harvest* ends. Harvest always comes in *summer* and is followed by the destructive frosts of *winter* and in the figure used by our Lord we believe that the *second* harvest or time of trouble stands to the first harvest soon to end, in the relation of *winter*. With this thought see the force of Jesus’ words pray (seek, desire) that you may get out before winter—in season to be an *overcomer*.

We know that some *will say*: “The harvest is past—the *summer is ended* and we are not saved.” “Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment [*dealings*] of the Lord. How do ye say, we are wise and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made He it. [They *use* very little of it]. ...The wise man is ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo they have rejected the Word of the Lord and what wisdom is in them?” (Jer. 8:7-9, 19-22.) No, Zion knows not the time of her *visitation*, and soon, when the harvest and

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summer are ended, it will also be true that the Lord is not in Zion—there is no king in her, there is no *balm* in Gilead—no physician *there* and those then in Zion will have lost the “*especial*” salvation, the *prize* of being made the *heavenly Zion*.

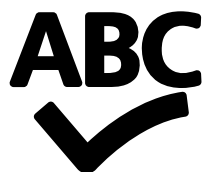
This “*winter*” time coming, is the time of Zion’s travail when the great majority of her children will be *brought forth* but those who will be members of the first-born will come *forth* before the travail [and we know not how soon thereafter, they will be “*changed* in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.”]

Thus we read “*Before* she travailed she brought forth; *before* her pain came she was delivered of a man child [the overcomers]. Who hath heard such a thing? ... for *as soon as Zion travailed* she brought forth her *children*” [the great company.] Isa. 66:7.

In view of these things can you wonder that Jesus says escape from the *house* before *winter*? The harvest is nearly over; the summer will soon be ended, and the winter of trouble will soon be here—“Come out of her my people.”



— June, 1881 —



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