

STUDY I

"THE DAY OF VENGEANCE"

Prophetic Mention of it--The Time at Hand--Object of this Volume--
General Observations.

"The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." "It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." *Isa. 63:4; 34:8.*

THUS the Prophet Isaiah refers to that period which *Daniel (12:1)* describes as "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation"; of which *Malachi (4:1)* says, "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble"; wherein the Apostle *James (5:1-6)* says the rich men shall weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them; the day which *Joel (2:2)* describes as a day of clouds and thick darkness; which *Amos (5:20)* says is "darkness and not light, even very dark and no brightness in it"; and to which the Lord refers (*Matt. 24:21,22*) as a time of "great tribulation," so ruinous in its character that, if it were not cut short, no flesh would survive its ravages.

That the dark and gloomy day thus described by the prophets is a day of judgment upon mankind socially and nationally --a day of national recompenses--is clear from many scriptures. But while noting these, let the reader bear in

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mind the difference between national judgment and individual judgment. While the nation is composed of individuals, and individuals are largely responsible for the courses of nations, and must and do suffer greatly in the calamities which befall them, nevertheless, the judgment of the world as individuals will be distinct from its judgment as nations.

The day of individual judgment for the world will be the Millennial age, as already shown.* Then, under the favorable conditions of the New Covenant, and granted a clear knowledge of the truth, and every possible assistance and incentive to righteousness, all men individually, and not collectively as nations and other social organizations, will

be on trial, or judgment, for eternal life. The judgment of nations, now instituted, is a judgment of men in their collective (religious and civil) capacities. The civil institutions of the world have had a long lease of power; and now, as the "Times of the Gentiles" come to a close, they must render up their accounts. And the Lord's judgment, expressed beforehand by the prophets, is that not one of them will be found worthy of a renewal of that lease or a continuance of life. The decree is that the dominion shall be taken from them, and that he whose right it is shall take the Kingdom, and the nations shall be given to him for an inheritance.

Ezek. 21:27; Dan. 7:27; Psa. 2:8; Rev. 2:26,27

Hear the word of the Lord to the nations assembled before him for judgment: "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people; let the earth hear, and all that is therein: the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies." "The Lord is...an everlasting King: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation." "A noise shall

*Vol. I., Chapter 8.

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come, even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations...Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind [intense and complicated trouble and commotion] shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." "Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth [the present social order] shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy; and then [afterward] will I turn unto the people a pure language; that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." ***Isa. 34:1,2; Jer. 10:10; 25:31-33; Zeph. 3:8,9; Luke 21:25***

We have already shown* that the time is at hand, and that the events of the day of Jehovah are even now crowding closely upon us. A few years more must of necessity ripen the elements now working in the direction of the predicted trouble; and, according to the sure word of prophecy, the present generation will witness the terrible crisis

and pass through the decisive conflict.

It is not our purpose, in calling attention to this subject, to arouse a mere sensation, or to seek to gratify idle curiosity. Nor can we hope to produce that penitence in the hearts of men which would work a change in the present social, political and religious order of society, and thus avert the impending calamity. The approaching trouble is inevitable: the powerful causes are all at work, and no human power is able to arrest their operation and progress toward the certain end: the effects must follow as the Lord foresaw

*Vol. II.

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and foretold. No hand but the hand of God could stay the progress of the present current of events; and his hand will not do so until the bitter experiences of this conflict shall have sealed their instruction upon the hearts of men.

The main object of this volume is not, therefore, to enlighten the world, which can appreciate only the logic of events and will have no other; but to forewarn, forearm, comfort, encourage and strengthen "the household of faith," so that they may not be dismayed, but may be in full harmony and sympathy with even the severest measures of divine discipline in the chastening of the world, seeing by faith the glorious outcome in the precious fruits of righteousness and enduring peace.

The day of vengeance stands naturally related to the benevolent object of its divine permission, which is the overthrow of the entire present order of things, preparatory to the permanent establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, under Christ, the Prince of Peace.

The Prophet *Isaiah* (*63:1-6*), taking his standpoint down at the end of the harvest of the Gospel age, beholds a mighty Conqueror, glorious in his apparel (clothed with authority and power), and riding forth victoriously over all his enemies, with whose blood all his garments are stained. He inquires who the wonderful stranger is, saying, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?"

Edom, it will be remembered, was the name given to Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, after he sold his birthright. (*Gen. 25:30-34*) The name was also subsequently applied both to the people descended from him and to the country in which they settled. (See *Gen. 25:30; 36:1; Num. 20:18,20,21;*

Jer. 49:17.) Consequently, the name Edom is an appropriate

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symbol of a class who, in this age, have similarly sold their birthright; and that, too, for a consideration as trifling as the mess of pottage which influenced Esau. The name is frequently so used by the prophets in reference to that great company of professed Christians which is sometimes called "the Christian World," and "Christendom" (i.e., Christ's Kingdom), which names the thoughtful should readily recognize as misnomers, betraying a great lack of understanding of the true object and character of Christ's Kingdom, and also of the appointed time and manner of its establishment. They are simply boastful appellations which misrepresent the truth. Is the world indeed yet Christian? or is even that part of it that claims the name?--the nations of Europe and America? Hear the thunder of cannon, the tread of marshalled hosts, the scream of bursting shells, the groans of the oppressed and the mutterings of the angry nations with deafening emphasis answer, No! Do these constitute Christ's Kingdom--a true Christendom? Who indeed will take upon himself the burden of *proof* of such a monstrous proposition? The fallacy of the boastful claim is so palpable that any attempt at proof would so thoroughly dissolve the delusion that none who wish to perpetuate it would presume to undertake it.

The fitness of the symbolic name "Edom" in its application to Christendom is very marked. The nations of so-called Christendom have had privileges above all the other nations, in that, to them, as to the Israelites of the previous age, have been committed the oracles of God. As a result of the enlightening influences of the Word of God, both directly and indirectly, have come to these nations all the blessings of civilization; and the presence in their midst of a few saints (a "little flock"), developed under its influence, has been as "the salt of the earth," preserving it to some extent

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from utter moral corruption. And these, by their godly examples, and by their energy in holding forth the Word of life, have been "the light of the world," showing men the way back to God and righteousness. But only a few in all these favored nations have made proper use of their advantages, which have come to them as an inheritance by reason

of their birth in the lands so blessed with the influences of the Word of God, direct and indirect.

Like Esau, the masses of Christendom have sold their birthright of special and peculiar advantage. By the masses, we mean not only the agnostic portion of it, but also the great majority of worldly professors of the religion of Christ, who are Christians only in name, but who lack the life of Christ in them. These have preferred the mean morsels of present earthly advantage to all the blessings of communion and fellowship with God and Christ, and to the glorious inheritance with Christ promised to those who faithfully follow in his footsteps of sacrifice. These, though they are *nominally* God's people--the nominal spiritual Israel of the Gospel age, of which "Israel after the flesh" in the Jewish age was a type--really have little or no respect for the promises of God. These, although they are indeed a mighty host, bearing the name of Christ, and posing before the world as the Church of Christ; although they have built up great organizations representing various schisms in the professed body of Christ; although they have written massive volumes of *un-*"systematic theology," and founded numerous colleges and seminaries for the teaching of these; and although they have done "many wonderful works" in the name of Christ, which were often, nevertheless, contrary to the teachings of his Word; these constitute the Edom class who have sold their birthright. The class includes almost all "Christendom"--all reared in the so-called

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Christian lands, who have not availed themselves of the privileges and blessings of the gospel of Christ and conformed their lives thereto. The remainder are the few justified, consecrated and faithful individuals who are joined to Christ by a living faith, and who, as "branches," abide in Christ, the True Vine. These constitute the true Israel of God--Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

The symbolic Edom of Isaiah's prophecy corresponds to the symbolic Babylon of Revelation, and of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Thus the Lord designates and describes that great system to which men ascribe the misleading name, Christendom--Christ's Kingdom. As all of the land of Edom symbolizes all of "Christendom," so its capital city, Bozrah, represented Ecclesiasticism, the chief citadel of Christendom. The prophet represents the Lord as a victorious warrior who makes a great slaughter in Edom, and specially in Bozrah. The name Bozrah signifies "sheepfold."

Bozrah is even yet noted for its goats, and the slaughter of this day of vengeance is said to be of the "lambs and goats." (**Isa. 34:6**) The goats would correspond to the "tares," while the lambs would represent the tribulation saints (**Rev. 7:14; 1 Cor. 3:1**) who neglected to use the opportunities granted them, and did not so run as to obtain the prize of their high calling; and who therefore, although not rejected of the Lord, were not accounted worthy to escape the trouble as matured "sheep"--called, chosen and faithful.

The reply to the Prophet's inquiry--"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" is, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." It is the same mighty one described by the Revelator (**Rev. 19:11-16**), the "King of kings and Lord of lords," Jehovah's Anointed, our blessed Redeemer and Lord Jesus.

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For our information the Prophet inquires further, saying, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winepress?" Hear the reply: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the nations there was none with me: and I trod them down in mine anger, and I trampled on them in my fury; and their blood was sprinkled on my garments, and all my raiment have I stained; for the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed was come. And I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished; and there was no one to support; and then my own arm [power] aided me; and my fury, this it was that upheld me. And I stamped down nations in my anger,...brought down to the earth their victorious strength." And the Revelator adds, "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." **Rev. 19:15**

The treading of the winepress is the last feature of harvest work. The reaping and gathering is all done first. So this treading of the winepress of the wrath of God into which "the vine of the *earth*" (the false vine which has misappropriated the name Christian and Christ's Kingdom) is cast when its iniquitous clusters are fully ripe (**Rev. 14:18-20**), represents the last work of this eventful "harvest" period.* It pictures to our minds the last features of the great time of trouble which shall involve all nations, and of which we are so abundantly forewarned in the Scriptures.

The fact that the King of kings is represented as treading the winepress "*alone*" indicates that the power exerted for

the overthrow of the nations will be divine power, and not mere human energy. It will be God's power that will punish the nations, and that will eventually "bring forth judgment [justice, righteousness, truth] unto victory." "He shall smite

*Vol. III, Chapter 6.

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the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips [the force and spirit of his truth] shall he slay the wicked." (*Isa. 11:4; Rev. 19:15; Psa. 98:1*) To no human generalship can the honors of the coming victory for truth and righteousness be ascribed. Wild will be the conflict of the angry nations, and world-wide will be the battlefield and the distress of nations; and no human Alexander, Caesar or Napoleon will be found to bring order out of the dreadful confusion. But in the end it will be known that the grand victory of justice and truth, and the punishment of iniquity with its just deserts, was brought about by the mighty power of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

All of these things are to be accomplished in the closing days of the Gospel age, because, as the Lord states through the Prophet (*Isa. 63:4; 34:8*), "The year of my redeemed is come," and "it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." All through the Gospel age the Lord has taken cognizance of the controversy, the strife and contention, in nominal Zion. He has observed how his faithful saints have had to contend for truth and righteousness, and even to suffer persecution for righteousness' sake at the hands of those who opposed them in the name of the Lord; and for wise purposes the Lord has hitherto refrained from interfering; but now the day of recompenses has come, and the Lord hath a controversy with them, as it is written, "For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish." (*Hos. 4:1-3*) This prophecy, so true in its fulfilment upon fleshly Israel, is doubly so in its fuller application to nominal spiritual Israel--Christendom.

"A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations: he will plead with all flesh: he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord." "Hear ye now what the Lord saith, ...Hear ye, O mountains [kingdoms], the Lord's controversy, and ye [hitherto] strong foundations of the earth [society]; for the Lord hath a controversy with his [professed] people," "He will give those that are wicked to the sword," *Jer. 25:31; Micah 6:1,2*

Hear again the Prophet Isaiah concerning this controversy: "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and harken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein: the world, and all things that come forth of it [all the selfish and evil things that come of the spirit of the world]; for the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath [taking the future standpoint] utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter; ...and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." *Isa. 34:1,2,7,8*

Thus the Lord will smite the nations and cause them to know his power, and he will deliver his faithful people who go not with the multitudes in the way of evil, but who wholly follow the Lord their God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And even this terrible judgment upon the world, as nations, thus dashing them to pieces as a potter's vessel, will prove a valuable lesson to them when they come forth to an individual judgment under the Millennial reign of Christ. Thus, in his wrath, the Lord will remember mercy.