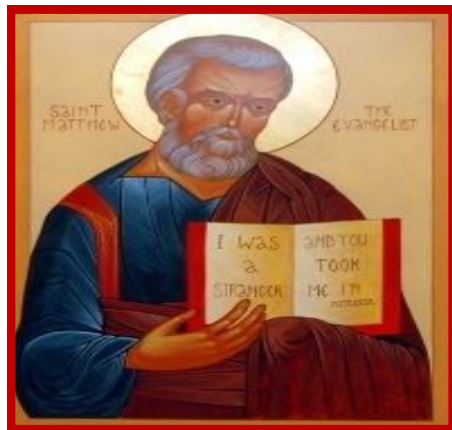


angels shall gather together the ashes of every one of the dead, and from them form the semblance of human bodies, which God shall organize and animate. And after life has been restored to those bodies, He shall, if they be those of the holy and elect, glorify and bless them. Wherefore also the Blessed themselves shall, by the gift of swiftness, with which they shall be endowed, immediately transfer themselves in the company of the angels from all parts of the world to the Valley of Jehoshaphat to judgment. But the reprobate, because they shall lack the gift of swiftness, shall be dragged thither by the devils, or rather by the angels.

*From the four winds, i.e., from the four quarters of the world, from whence the four chief winds blow. Whence he adds by way of explanation, from one end of heaven to the other.*

The Greek is ἀπ' ἀκρῶν ἕως ἀκρῶν, i.e., *from extremity to extremity*, from one terminus of heaven and earth to their other terminus, from the east to the west. For ἀκρῶν signifies any *extreme limit*, whether above or below, whether to the right or to the left. Mark has (xiii. 27), *from the height of earth to the height of heaven* (Vulg.), by which is meant the same thing as in S. Matthew, from one extreme of earth to the other extremity of heaven and earth. For the earth at its extremities seems to be joined to the sky. This is at the horizon. There is no reason why *extremity of heaven* (Vulg.) in this place should not be taken literally, meaning that the angels shall gather together the elect wherever they may be, whether in heaven or earth. For the bodies of the Patriarchs, who rose again with Christ, are in Heaven. Wherefore they shall descend from Heaven to the valley of Jehoshaphat at the time of the Last Judgment.

But the former sense seems to be the best.



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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

### Continuation of Matthew 24: 22-31

**Verse 22-** *Except those days . . . shortened*; Gr. *ἐκολβώθησαν*, a period or stop put to them; i.e., by the Lord, as Mark adds.

*The elect* are twofold: those who are elected to grace, who are all the faithful and the righteous; and those who are elected to glory, who are all those who shall be saved. Both classes may be here understood, but especially the second. For these are they who are perfectly elected. And whosoever are elected to final grace, so that they persevere in it to the end of life, are those who are also elected to glory. The sense is—unless God from eternity had decreed, and had fulfilled the same in time, that the days of the wasting of Judæa should be shorter—shorter, I mean, than the sins of the Jews and the anger of the Romans demanded, all Jews would have perished. For if the time of the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of Judæa had lasted longer, no flesh, i.e., no Jews, would have survived. For the rage of the Romans against the Jews

children; nor the angels themselves to say a word, as is their wont, for men, because the nature of judgment accords not with mercy, as neither the time of mercy with judgment. As saith the Prophet, 'I will sing of mercy and judgment;' of mercy in the first Advent, of judgment in the second."

Hear S. Bernard mourning, yea, trembling with horror (*Serm. 16 in Cant.*), "I am afraid of hell; I fear the face of the Judge, before whom the heavenly hosts themselves tremble. I tremble at His almighty wrath, at the crash of a falling world, at the conflagration of the elements, at the horrible tempest, at the voice of the archangel, and the dreadful words. I tremble at the teeth of the infernal beast, at the belly of hell, at the lions roaring for their prey. I dread the gnawing of the worm, the fiery torrent, the smoke and vapour, the brimstone, and the spirit of tempests. I dread the outer darkness." Then he adds, "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that by my tears I may prevent the weeping and gnashing of teeth, the hard chains for hand and foot, the weight of the fetters that press and bind and burn without consuming? Woe is me, my mother! Wherefore hast thou brought me forth, a child of sorrow? a child of bitterness, of indignation, of weeping without end? Why did the knees prevent me, and the breasts that I sucked, that I should be born for burning and for fuel of fire?"

*And they shall see the Son*, &c. 1st That the clouds may temper the exceeding brightness of the Body of Christ, which otherwise would blind the eyes of the reprobate. 2d Because a cloud is the symbol of the hidden Deity. 3d Because the cloud is the seat, as well as the vehicle and covert, of Christ's glory. Hence, constantly in the Old Testament, God appeared to Moses and the Prophets in a cloud. (*See Ezek. i. 4, and Ex. xix. 9-18.*) There is an allusion to Daniel (vii. 13), "And lo, one like unto the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven."

*With power*, &c. (*Vulg.*), *with great virtue or strength and majesty*. For as Christ at His first Advent came in great infirmity of the flesh, in poverty and contempt, so He hath thereby deserved to come in His second Advent with great strength, glory, and majesty. *His Power* and *strength* shall appear in that at His command all the dead shall arise in a moment; in that all men, angels, and devils shall behold and worship Him as their God, their Lord, and their judge; in that He shall pass sentence upon all according to their deserts, and shall execute His sentence, so that none shall dare to gainsay or resist. His *majesty* shall appear in the infinite splendour of His body, in the multitude and brightness of all the angels surrounding Him, and in His garments of radiant clouds.

**Verse 31-** *And He shall send His angels*, &c. There is an inversion of order in this passage; for Christ shall previously send His angels with a trumpet, or rather with many trumpets, throughout all the world, to wake the dead and summon them to judgment. For when this trumpet sounds very many

Our Salmeron also says, "The doctors of the Church believe that, together with the Cross will appear the pillar, the scourge, the crown of thorns, the nails, the sponge, the spear, and the rest of the instruments of the Passion." So, too, S. Thomas (*Opusc. ii. cap. 244*). This is probable, but not certain, because nowhere expressly declared.

Lastly, at that time *the sign of the cross* shall appear on the foreheads of all the elect, according to what is said in *Apoc. vii. 3*, "Let us sign the servants of our God on their foreheads" (*Vulg.*); and *Ezek. ix. 4*, in an allegorical sense, "Sign *Tau*, *i.e.*, the sign of the Cross, upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry" (*Hebr. and Vulg.*). Hear S. Augustine (*Serm. de temp. 130*), "Hast thou considered how great is the virtue of this sign of the Cross? The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light; but the Cross shall shine and shall obscure the heavenly luminaries. When the stars shall fall, it alone shall send forth radiance, that thou mayst learn how the Cross is more luminous than the moon and more glorious than the sun. For like as when a king enters into a city, his soldiers go before him, bearing upon their shoulders the royal arms and standards, and all the pomp of military array, to proclaim the monarch's entry; so when the Lord descends from Heaven, the angel hosts shall go before Him, bearing upon their lofty shoulders that sign which is the ensign of triumph, to announce to the inhabitants of earth the approach of the King of Heaven."

**Verse 30-** *And then shall all the tribes, &c.* That is, many of every tribe, *viz.*, all the reprobate and the damned, because they have neglected their salvation, to procure which Christ was crucified. But the elect will rejoice and sing, because they will see that they have been saved and blessed by the Cross. S. Augustine gives the cause of this weeping, "*All the tribes of the earth shall mourn*, because they shall see their accuser, that is, the Cross itself; and at the sight of this reprovener they shall acknowledge their sin. Too late, and in vain shall they confess their impious blindness. And dost thou marvel that when Christ cometh He will bring His Cross, since He will show His wounds also?" S. Chrysostom also, "*Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn*, because they shall perceive that they gained nothing by His death, and that they crucified Him who ought to be adored." And S. Jerome, "Rightly doth He say, The tribes of the earth; for they shall mourn who have no citizenship in Heaven, but whose names are written in the earth." Again, hear S. Chrysostom on this passage (*Hom. 77*), "He brings with Him the Cross, that their sin may be condemned without accusation, as though a man who had been struck with a stone should produce the stone itself, or the blood-stained clothes as a witness of the deed." Moreover, *they shall mourn*, because (as *Auctor Imperfecti., Hom. 77*, says) Christ will then reprove the wicked thus, "For your sakes I became man, was bound and crucified. Where is the fruit of all My sufferings? Behold the price of My blood, which I paid for the redemption of your souls! Where is your service, which you owe Me as the price of My blood? I valued you above My own glory, when, being God, I appeared in fashion of a man; and yet ye accounted Me of less worth than any of your possessions. For ye loved every vile thing upon earth more than My justice and faith." And shortly afterwards he adds, "Deservedly shall they mourn, because then neither shall money profit the rich to do alms withal; nor righteous parents be able to intercede for their

was very great, as against a rebellious and obstinate nation; and unless the gentleness of Titus had somewhat restrained them, the Romans would have slain all the Jews. God therefore shortened this time of slaughter *for the elect's sake*; that is, partly for the sake of those Christians who had not been able or willing to flee away from Jerusalem, partly on account of the Jews who, in the great slaughter of the siege, had been converted to Christ, as well as for the sake of those who were afterwards to be sprung from them and converted to Christ. What is meant is this, "If this tribulation of the Jews had lasted longer, none of them would have continued alive, and would not, by consequence have persevered in faith and grace in this life, and so no one of them would have survived to be elect and saved. In order, therefore, that some may survive, who by the predestination of God shall be saved, those, namely, whom God foresees and foreordains, shall remain in this tribulation, and be converted to Christ, and so be saved, for this cause, I say, God will abbreviate and cut short these days of tribulations."

That such was the case appears from Josephus (*Bell. 7. 15*). He testifies that more than forty thousand Jews were saved by Titus in the destruction of Jerusalem. Where observe that God, for the sake of His elect and believing ones, saved alive many Jews who did not believe, but were obstinate and reprobate. "Therefore," says S. Chrysostom, "let not the Jews say that these things happened to them because of the preaching and worship of Christ. He shows not only that Christians were not the cause of these evils, but that if there had been no Christians, all Jews would have perished. For if the war, by Divine permission, had been prolonged, no remnant of the Jews would have escaped. But in order that the believing Jews might not be destroyed with the unbelieving, God put a more speedy end to the war than He would have done."

*Tropologically:* Learn from hence how great is God's love and care for His elect. For them He spared many Jews. For the elect's sake God created, and still preserves the whole world, and all the things that are therein. Yea, for their sake He caused Christ, His own Son, to become man, and willed that He should suffer death upon the cross. Wherefore S. Paul saith (*1 Cor. iii. 22*), "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come."

**Verse 23-** *Then if any man, &c.* Some think that Christ here passes from the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem to those before the end of the world. But it is better to refer them to the destruction of Jerusalem, of which He has been speaking thus far. This is the force of the word *then*.

*Lo, here is Christ.* The Jews knew that the advent of the Messiah was now nigh at hand, because the sceptre had been transferred from Judah to aliens, Herod and the Romans, according to Jacob's prophecy (*Gen. xlix. 10*). Wherefore, many at that time flattered Vespasian by saying that he was the Messiah, as we learn from Suetonius. Others gave Herod the same

flattering title. Moreover, there were at that time in Jerusalem, as Josephus and S. Jerome testify, three factions, which had each its own leader, who boasted himself to be the Messiah, who would defend the Jews against the Romans. These chiefs were Eleazar the son of Simon, John the son of Levi, Simon the son of Gorias, who all contended for supremacy amongst themselves. Such also was the impostor who, under Adrian, pretended to be Messiah, and wished to be called Barchochabas, the son of a Star, as though in him was fulfilled the prophecy of Balaam, "A star shall rise out of Jacob." Of this man Eusebius says (*H. E.* 4. 6): "Barchochabas, a wicked and cruel man, was the leader of a Jewish army. And referring to the signification of his name, he persuaded them, as if they had been vile slaves, that he was a great star for their salvation, and that he bore the succour of light to sick mortals and those who were doomed to long darkness."

Such in our own age were David George; also John of Leyden, who seized a monastery in a city of Westphalia, where he made himself Christ, a king, and created twelve apostles, whom he sent into all the neighbouring cities, that they should bring all men to him as Christ. But being besieged by the Catholics and captured, he was hung alive in a wickerwork cage from the top of a tower, and being eaten by flies and wasps, he died A.D. 1536. There shall be many more such in the time of Antichrist.

*Tropologically*: such are heresiarchs, who proclaim another Christ, in that they affirm other doctrines, which are not the doctrines of Christ, but of Antichrist. For although the word *then* properly denotes the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, yet it may be taken indefinitely, so as to denote any period whatsoever, from the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the world, as S. Chrysostom observes (*Hom.* 77). Moreover, the heretics foolishly say that by the words, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, Catholics are denoted, because they say of the Eucharist, "Lo, here is Christ." For Christ is here speaking of visible heretics and false prophets, who shall call themselves Christ's, and draw away disciples after them. He is not speaking of the Eucharist, where Christ is invisible.

**Verse 24-** *For there shall arise false Christs, &c.* wrought by art magic, by the power of the devil, whom many heresiarchs have had as a familiar spirit, as I have shown in 1 Tim. iv. 1. Such was their great prince Simon Magus, who deluded Nero and the Romans, so that they erected a statue to him at Rome; but at length he himself, flying through the air by the aid of the devil, was dashed down to the earth by the prayers of S. Peter, and falling upon a stone, broke his knees, "so that he who had attempted to fly was not able to walk; and he who had taken wings, lost his legs," as S. Maximus says (*Hom.* 5, *de SS. Petro et Paulo*).

*So as to deceive—even the elect.* Understand this of final falling away, in such a sense that the elect should finally fall from grace, and be lost. For there is no surer sign of reprobation than that any one should apostatize from the faith. Falsely, therefore, does Calvin infer from this passage that the elect cannot sin. They do sin, but they repent and rise again.

be rolled together as a scroll: and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." For as Bede says (*in Luc.* xxi. 25), "As when trees are shaken to their fall, they are wont to show premonitions of the coming crash; so likewise when the end of the world draweth nigh, shall the elements nod and tremble as though they were in fear;" and the heavens burning with fire, and as it were perishing, shall rise again with the Saints, and shall be renewed in a glorious state of felicity.

**Verse 30-** *And then shall appear the sign, &c.* You will ask, what is the sign of the Son of Man, that is to say, of Christ Incarnate? I answer, it is the Cross. For this is the sign, because it is the standard (*vexillum*) of Christ, and the cause of the victory of believers. And as it was beforetime the scandal of unbelievers and the impious, so will it be in the Day of Judgment their condemnation and their torment. So the Fathers, almost *passim*. Yea, the Church herself gives this meaning her sanction, when she sings in the office for Holy Cross Day, "This sign of the Cross shall be in heaven when the Lord shall come to judgment." There are three reasons why the Cross shall then appear. 1st To signify that Christ by the Cross has merited this judicial power and glory. 2d To show that Christ was crucified for the salvation of all men, and that therefore they are ungrateful and without excuse who have neglected so great grace and love. 3d To show that all worshippers of Christ crucified shall be then exalted with Him to Heaven, and all who hate and despise Him cast down to hell.

From this saying of Christ it is extremely probable that the actual cross on which He was crucified shall appear in heaven at the Day of Judgment, for the consolation of the Saints, who have been saved by it, and who therefore have striven to conform themselves in their lives, by patience and self-denial, to Christ crucified; and for the condemnation of the wicked, who have despised the Cross of Christ, and who have ungratefully preferred pleasures to self-mortification. This is the opinion of S. Chrysostom (*Hom. de Cruce et Latrone*). The Sibyl predicts the same thing (*lib.* 6)—

"Whereon God hung, O blessed Tree!  
Not earth alone, but heaven hath thee,  
When lightning-crown'd God's face we see."

S. Anselm is of a different opinion, viz., that at the Day of Judgment it will not be the actual Cross of Christ which will appear in the air, but a symbol, or image of it, formed by the angels. The expression *sign* is in favour of this. Moreover, S. Chrysostom and Augustine and S. Cyril teach that this standard of the Cross will be borne by the angels before the face of Christ, coming to judgment, as a trophy of victory, and a royal banner of supreme power and dignity.

rend their garments. So, in like manner, when the human race, for whom all things were made, is about to come to an end, all creation languishes, the powers of the heavens mourn, and laying aside their brightness, are clothed with robes of darkness.”

*And the stars*, &c. 1. Because at the end of the world the stars also shall be darkened, so that they shall appear to men to have fallen from the heavens. For Holy Scripture often speaks of things not as they are in themselves, but as they appear unto men.

2. *Stars*, *i.e.*, comets and such like bodies, which are formed in the atmosphere, shall then fall upon the earth. This may be gathered from Joel ii. 30.

S. Chrysostom and Euthymius add, that at the end of the world *stars*, properly so called, shall fall from the heavens to the earth. But this must be understood of very small stars, and such as are invisible to us. For as to the visible stars, they are larger than our whole earth, and cannot therefore fall upon it.

*And the powers of the heavens*, &c. Origen, S. Chrysostom, &c., understand by these *powers* the sevenfold choirs or orders of the *angels*, which are called *powers* (Lat. *virtutes*) because they excel in strength (*virtute*). And the meaning would be, that the angels, mighty as they are, when they behold the sun and moon become dark, and the stars fall from heaven, and many other dreadful prodigies multiplied at the end of the world, will stand, as it were, astonished and stupefied at such great changes and terrible sights.

Here may be mentioned the opinion of Suarez (3 *p. qu.* 59, *art.* 6, *disp.* 56, *sect.* 3), “*The powers of the heavens*,” saith he, “are the angels, who, by their surpassing strength, cause the heavens to revolve; because they, as the ministers of the Divine justice and vengeance against the wicked, shall change the accustomed order of motion of the heavens. Thus there shall be utter confusion in this lower world.”

But more simply, by *the powers of the heavens*, you may understand the stars themselves and their influences. The meaning is, that at the end of the world the very great and very strong stars of heaven shall change their motions, appearances, influences, and in consequence everything upon earth shall be in perturbation, so that the world shall be shaken by unwonted movements, the sea shall overflow, and the atmosphere shall be troubled with comets, thunderbolts, meteors, whirlwinds, so that all things will seem to be utterly in confusion.

Lastly, and most plainly, by *the powers*, &c., you may understand their poles and hinges. These are *δυνάμεις*, Heb. *gibburoth*, the strength and props, as it were, of the heavens. It means, that at the end of the world the whole heavens shall be shaken, all plucked from their poles and hinges, so that they will seem to fall down, so as to strike terror into the wicked, and to set forth the wrath of an angry Christ. I have treated of this matter more at length in *Apoc.* vi. 14. There is an allusion to Job xxvi. 11, “The pillars of heaven shall tremble, and shall fear by reason, of His rebuke;” and to Isa. xxxix. 4, “And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall

*If it were possible*. So great shall be the tribulation and the temptation of the false Christs and heretics, their power, deceit, guile, and speciousness, that, if such a thing were possible, even the elect would be seduced by them, and come over to their errors and heresies, and so fall from the faith and be damned. But this can never happen, because of God’s more powerful protection, and His infallible predestination, as S. Augustine says (*de Civ.* xx. 19), and according to Christ’s own words, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall not perish eternally: and no one shall pluck them out of My Father’s hand,” S. John x. 28 (*Vulg.*). For it is not possible that the elect should fall away so as to become reprobate. I do not speak of any physical or absolute necessity, but of that moral foreknowledge and predestination of God, by which He so works, and so disposes it, and combines it with the issue of future events, that there is necessity in a composite sense, as Theologians say. For although the elect are free, and free to sin, to go astray, and be lost, nevertheless, inasmuch as it has been laid down that God has predestinated and foreseen that they cannot sin, go astray, and be damned, it is impossible that they should sin, go astray, and be damned. For the predestination of God is most sure, and cannot fail. These two things, therefore, cannot co-exist, that a man should be predestinated, and yet be damned; that God should foreknow that such a man will die in His grace, and be saved, and also foreknow that he will die in sin, and be damned. In a similar manner S. John speaks of the Jews (xii. 39), “Wherefore they could not believe, because Isaiah saith again, He hath blinded their eyes:” not as though Isaiah’s prophecy were the cause why the Jews did not believe in Christ, but because his prediction of the incredulity of the Jews was incompatible with their believing in Christ. And S. Paul says (1 *Tim.* ii. 19), “The foundation of God (concerning the elect) standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.”

Moreover, those Theologians who say that the elect unto glory are persons who have been elected independently of all provision of their works, ascribe the force of this election, this necessity of their being saved, to the Divine decree; but the others, in order not to take away man’s free will, must take the matter in a composite sense. They must combine the constancy and perseverance of the elect with God’s decree to bestow this perseverance upon them, in such manner as not to interfere with their free will, and with His carrying this out in time, that is to say, by giving them in time grace of congruity and grace efficacious, whereby they may effectually, but of their own free will, resist heretics, and persevere in the faith and grace of God. Nor is it more wonderful that those cannot fall whom God wills not to fall (for who hath resisted His will?), than that they cannot fall whom God has foreseen will not fall. For God’s prescience and His will are both infallible.

Some by *the elect* in this place understand those who are especially beloved and chosen of God, and who, on that account, are wont to suffer dreadful things from the devil and heretics and wicked men; but they

bravely and constantly resist and overcome them. It is meant, that so great shall be the temptation, that even most holy men, religious and apostolic, who are especially dear to God, would fall away from the faith, if such a thing could be, and the more powerful grace and sure election of God did not prevent it.

**Verse 26-** *If, therefore, they shall say, &c.* Christ here denotes Simon of Gerasa, who collected a multitude of robbers and soldiers in the deserts and mountains, on the pretext that, being Messiah, he would defend the Jews against the Romans. He was admitted into Jerusalem to be a check upon the Zealots, but he acted as tyrannically towards the citizens as the Zealots themselves. (*Josh. Bell. 5. 7.*)

*In the secret chambers;* that is, the innermost and secret places of the Temple, where God is accustomed to manifest His presence and aid the Jews, that He may now protect them by means of His Messias from the Romans. Christ here signifies Eleazar and John, the leaders of the Zealots, who occupied the inner court of the Temple, on the pretext of defending the city against the Romans, but in reality that they might rule over it and despoil it. So Josephus (*de Bell. 6. 1 and 4, and 7. 11*). He relates that when the Temple was on fire, many Jews fled to the porch without the Temple, because a certain false prophet had said that those who fled to the Temple on that day would be safe under God's protection. But those all perished—either by the flames or the sword of the Romans.

Luke adds, *The days shall come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and shall not see it.* That is, "The time shall come when ye shall desire my Presence which ye have now, both for your consolation in so great tribulation, and for the manifestation and confutation of the errors and heresies which shall arise."

**Verse 27-** *For as the lightning, &c.* Ye must not give credit to wanderers, who shall say, Messiah, the Saviour of the Jews from the Romans, is hidden in desert places, or in secret chambers in the Temple; for when He shall come the second time to judgment to bless the saints and condemn the wicked, He will appear publicly to the whole world. The judge of all will appear like the lightning, radiant with great glory and majesty, so as to dazzle the eyes of all, and turn them upon Himself, in such a manner that no one will be able to doubt that He is the Christ the Saviour of the world. He means, "My advent, My return to judgment, will be like the lightning, because—1st it will be sudden; 2d it will be unexpected; 3d it will be manifest to all; 4th it will be glorious; 5th mighty, so that no one can resist it; 6th it will not be on the earth, but in the air, like the lightning, which makes itself plain to view; not in a corner, but to the world in a moment of time." For Christ is here replying to the mind and thoughts of the Apostles. For they thought that Christ would inaugurate His glorious Kingdom upon earth immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem. So S. Chrysostom, "For as the lightning needs no preacher nor messenger, but appears in a moment to all, so shall that advent be seen everywhere alway to shine immediately." Also *Auctor Imperfecti*, "As lightning traverses all things in the twinkling of an eye, so likewise shall the Son of God not seem to be coming, but to have come. For if the sun, which has been created for our service, possesses such splendour, that in whatsoever part of the heavens it may be, it appeareth everywhere present; how much more

From what has been said, it would seem that Alcazar (*in Apoc. vi. 12*), from the expression "thus" in this verse of S. Matthew, gathers incorrectly that all the things which are here spoken of refer literally, not to the end of the world, but to the destruction of Jerusalem. By the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars, this writer understands literally the blindness of the Jews, their calamities, and the slaughter which was made of them by Titus. By *the shaking of the powers of the heavens*, he understands the flight of the Christians from the city, by whose holiness it was sustained. But every one can see that these meanings are mystical and symbolical.

*The sun shall be darkened.* Observe that this sign and those which follow are not after the General Resurrection, as SS. Jerome and Chrysostom suppose, but previous to it, as is plain from S. Luke xxi. 26, and Joel ii. 31. As to the meaning, S. Augustine (*Epist. 80, ad Hesych.*) says, "The sun, *i.e.*, the Church, shall be darkened, because in those tremendous temptations and tribulations which shall be in the end of the world, many who had seemed as bright and as firm as the sun and the stars shall fall from the faith." This is the allegorical sense, and is just and apposite.

You will ask, what will be the cause of this great obscuration of the sun before the Judgment Day? SS. Hilary, Jerome, Chrysostom answer, that it will be because the excessive brightness of Christ's glorious body will make the sun grow pale. But I have already observed that these signs will take place before the General Resurrection, and therefore before Christ's coming to judgment. So that I reply, the sun will be darkened because God will take away from it, not its light indeed, but its power of illuminating, by which it shall come to pass that in the sun there will be light, but upon the earth nothing but darkness. Thus was it at the Passion of Christ. Again, God will hide the sun by means of thick clouds and smoke. Perchance also there will be extraordinary and miraculous eclipses, as may be gathered from Lactantius vii. 16.

Of this darkening of the sun at the end of the world, the calamities and prodigies which took place at the destruction of Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Idumæa, &c., were types. When, therefore, the Prophets speak of them, they speak by catachresis of the horribleness of the destruction, by saying that the sun and moon and stars shall be darkened. For such dreadful calamities bring on men giddiness and blindness. Thus those overthrows were types and foreshadowings of the destruction of the world, when the heavenly luminaries will be literally darkened.

*And the moon, &c.* For when the sun is darkened, the moon must necessarily be so likewise, since she derives her light from him.

*Symbolically: Auctor Imperfecti* says, "When the master of the household dies, his whole household is troubled; his family make lamentations and

says, "Where the *ruin* is, there are the *eagles*; *i.e.*, where He fell, there He rose again." Again, the *eagle* is the symbol of the blessed eternity of the Saints. For the *eagle* is very long-lived, and when it grows old it renews its youth. Hence the proverb, "The old age of an eagle."

*Symbolically*: the *eagle*, because it has sharp sight, is a symbol of truth. Whence S. Ambrose, "*Where the body,*" &c., *i.e.*, "Where the Body of Christ is, there is truth." Again, the eagle is a type of the angels, because of their swiftness. Therefore S. Ambrose (*lib. 1, de Sacram. c. 2*) understands the words of the Eucharist. For at the Eucharist, where the Body of Christ is, the *eagles*, *i.e.*, the angels, assist. So also do the Saints and Priests. The same also saith (*lib. 4, c. 2*), "The form of the Body is the altar, the Body of Christ is on the altar. Ye are *eagles*, renewed by being washed from sin."

**Verse 29-** *But immediately after the tribulation, &c.* Christ passes from the destruction of Jerusalem to the destruction of the world, and the signs which shall precede it.

*Tribulation.* Understand the persecutions and temptations which shall arise from false Christs and false Prophets, of which the 23d verse speaks; or rather the tribulation which came upon the Jews at the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. For this only did He call tribulation a little above in ver. 21. Where observe, with S. Chrysostom, Jerome, and others, that Christ, in order to keep His disciples and those who succeeded them in constant expectation of His Advent and the Day of Judgment, and to urge them to be always prepared for it, seems to favour the mistake of the Apostles, and to speak as though the end of the world would follow immediately upon the destruction of the city, but in a different way from that in which the Apostles understood it. For although 1560 years have elapsed since the destruction of Jerusalem, and many more will yet elapse before the end of the world, nevertheless all this period, long as it seems to us, whose span of life is so short, yet compared with the eternity of God, who is the true Measurer of times, is but very small, yea, only as it were a moment. Thus answers S. Peter (2 *Pet. iii. 8*), "One day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise. This is why the Prophets and Apostles call the period of Christ and of the Gospel Dispensation, *the last time and the last hour*, as appears from 1 John ii. 18; 1 Cor. x. 11; Jas. v. 8; Heb. x. 37. For the same reason Haggai (ii. 4) says that there shall be but a little while to the coming of Christ, and yet there were 517 years still to elapse before He came. There is also this to be considered, that the tribulation of the world shall immediately follow the tribulation of the city, in the sense that no very remarkable and exceptional tribulation of the Jews shall intervene between those two events, so that the one shall very closely succeed the other, not as regards time, but in type, similitude, and fearfulness. For a similar reason Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest of the Prophets, when they describe the destruction of Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, and of Judæa by the Chaldeans, pass on at once to the antitype, the destruction of the world, as though it were about to take place immediately. And they set forth how dreadful shall be the former events by the signs and horrors which shall take place at the latter event. This appears by Isa. xiii. 19; Jer. xv. 9; Amos viii. 9; Joel ii. 10.

shall Christ, the Spiritual Sun, when He cometh, be seen by all the world, or rather, the world be seen by Him?"

This author adds, that Christ here makes mention of lightning, because lightning shall go before Him when He comes to judgment, according to the words of the Psalm, xcvi. 4, 5, "His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth."

**Verse 28-** *Wheresoever the carcase is, &c.* There is an allusion to Job xxxix. 33, *And wheresoever the carcase (Heb. the slain) shall be, he will be there.* After the metaphor of lightning, he subjoins the parable of the eagle; both because, as the eagle is not struck by lightning, so the elect will not be affected by the thunderbolt of the sentence and the curse with which Christ shall condemn the wicked to hell in the Day of Judgment, as also in order that the Apostles might not suppose that the glorious Advent of Christ should, like lightning, pass away, and should ask, "What reward will accrue to us therefrom?" Christ gives the assurance that He will indeed appear like the lightning, unto all, but that He will abide with His elect, and will feed them with His glory, as an eagle feeds upon a body as its prey and food.

*Carcase.* The Vulg. seems to have read *σῶμα*, as some copies still have it. But a better reading is *πτῶμα*, which properly signifies *ruin, fall*, and from hence comes to mean *a carcase*. *Πτῶμα* comes from *πίπτω*, as *cadaver* from *cadendo*. But by *πτῶμα*, Salmeron understands *prey, hunting*, either for the body of a bird, a hare, or some such thing as eagles hunt. This is called *πτῶμα*, because the bodies of those creatures which eagles capture fall upon the earth. For the eagle is too noble to eat carrion, or the dead body of anything save of what it has itself captured and killed.

Aristotle, however (*lib. 9, Hislor. Anim. c. 32*), enumerate Six kinds of eagles, and amongst them the *γυπάετον*, or vulture-eagle, that is to say, a species which seeks out dead bodies. Hence the LXX. in Job xxxix. 27 translate by *γύψ*. This is the bird of which Christ here speaks, according to Aldrovandus and others. Both meanings and readings suit this passage, as I will presently show.

The words constitute an enigmatical parable, signifying that Christ cannot be hid. As though He had said, "As eagles discern the bodies upon which they prey, even from on high, and fly towards them, and as a vulture smells a carcase even when it is very far off, so in like manner shall My glorious return to judge the world not be hidden or secret, but manifest to all. Wherefore the faithful and righteous at that time, like eagles of most piercing sight, and like vultures of most acute scent, shall, by divine power, scent Me out, that is, they shall perceive Me beforehand. They shall discern Me with their eyes, and fly to Me, that they may most happily feed upon

Me and upon My glory, and be refreshed and blessed for ever.” And in truth there shall be no need then to search where is Christ. For His Advent shall be glorious, and visible to all the world. This is what Paul says, “We shall be snatched up into the clouds, to meet Christ in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 *Thess.* iv. 17).

Christ compares Himself to a carcase, that He may signify His death, by which He merited glory for us. He compares Himself also to a body made alive again, that He may signify His glorious Resurrection, by which He will feed and bless His elect. Wherefore S. Hilary gathers from this passage that the universal judgment of Christ will take place on that spot where He hung a corpse upon the cross, and where He was buried,—that is to say, near Jerusalem, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, as Joel teaches (iii. 2). Hear S. Hilary, “He called the saints eagles, from the flight of the spiritual body, whose gathering together by the angels He showed would be in the place of His Passion. And rightly may His glorious Advent there be expected, where for us He procured an eternity of glory by the sufferings of the body of His humility.” And S. Jerome says, “Eagles are they who take wings to fly to the .Passion of Christ.” It is agreeable to reason that Christ should there judge all men, where He was unjustly judged for all; and that His glory should be there seen, where His lowliness and humility were witnessed; that He should descend from Heaven in the place where He ascended into Heaven, and that so the whole work of our salvation should be completed and finished in that same spot where it was begun.

Moreover, the saints are rightly compared to eagles, because the eagle is the king of birds, as the lion is the king of beasts. So likewise are the Saints kings, not of earth, but of Heaven. Hear Origen, “He said not, where the carcase is, thither shall the vultures or the crows be gathered together, but the eagles, to signify that those who have believed in the Passion of the Lord are all great and regal.”

Here also *Auctor Imperfecti*, who for *eagles* understands *vultures*, “Concerning vultures, the Scripture saith in the Book of Job, Wheresoever the carcase is, there will be found the vulture’s young ones. For this is the natural property of vultures. As some say, they can scent a corpse even across the sea. But because vultures are foul birds, Christ adopted the name of eagles to the habits of vultures, that thus might be shown the gathering together of the Saints to the Advent of Christ, that in the royal eagles the regal dignity might be shown. For in this manner are the Saints like unto eagles, because as eaglets are proved by the sun, in such manner, that if without blenching they can look straight up at the sun, they are considered legitimate offspring, but if they cannot do this, they are regarded as spurious; so, also, the sons of God are proved by the justice of Christ. If they are able fully to accept the words of His justice, they are understood to be legitimate; but if not, they are understood to be the offspring of the devil.”

2. Because, as S. Ambrose says (*in S. Luke* xviii.), eagles renew themselves. So also the Saints are renewed here by grace, and hereafter by glory, according to those words of the Psalm, “They shall renew their strength like eagles.”

3. Because there is something divine about the eagle. As Aristotle says (*lib. 9, Hist. Anim. c. 32*), “Eagles fly on high, that they may see to the farthest possible extent. Wherefore men say that the eagle is the only bird which is divine.” Hence by *eagles* S. Chrysostom understands the multitude of Angels, Martyrs, Saints, who all, as it were divine spirits, shall be gathered together to Christ their God in the Day of Judgment, that they may ascend up with Him in glory to Heaven.

4. The *saints* are *eagles*, because they fly above the earth, and mount up to Heaven, that they may behold heavenly things, and look down upon earthly things as far beneath them. Whence they say with S. Paul, “Our conversation is in Heaven.”

5. As *eagles* possess sharp and strong sight, so as to be able with unblenching eye to gaze at the sun; thus do the Saints assiduously, with the keen eyes of their minds, contemplate Christ, who is the Sun of justice.

*Allegorically*: the Body of Christ is the Church, in which are *eagles*, that is, spiritual persons of heavenly life and doctrine. So, on the contrary, heretics are like black crows and chattering daws; or like moles, wholly conversant with earth and earthly things. Hear S. Ambrose (*in Luc. c. xvii. last ver.*), “Do not the *eagles* seem to thee to be about the Body, when the Son of Man shall come in that Day with clouds of them that understand? When every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him? This, is the Body of which it has been said, ‘My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed.’ Round about this Body are the true eagles, who fly with spiritual wings. There likewise fly the eagles who believe that Jesus is come in the flesh. ‘For every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.’ For where there is faith, there is the sacrament, there is the abode of sanctity. This is the Body of the Church, in which by the grace of baptism we are renewed in spirit, and the decay of age is renewed by the return of youth.”

*Anagogically*: the Blessed, in the Day of Judgment, after the Resurrection, shall be gathered together to the Body, *i.e.*, to Christ risen and glorified, that they may fly with Him to life in Heaven. By *eagles* is denoted the swiftness of the Blessed, according to the words in Isa. xl., “They shall fly like eagles.” Wherefore S. Gregory expounds thus (*S. Thom. in Catena*), “Wheresoever the Body,” &c. As though Christ had said, “Because I, incarnate, preside in the heavenly seat, I sustain with flesh the life of My elect, I lift them up to Heaven.” And S. Ambrose (*in Ps. xlix. sub finem*), for *body*, reading *ruin*, or *fall*, which is the meaning of the Greek *πτώμα*,