

The Inner Meaning of the Last Judgment Symbolism in Matthew 24 and 25

Excerpted from *Secrets of Heaven*
by Emanuel Swedenborg

Translated from the Latin by Lisa Hyatt Cooper

Swedenborg Foundation
West Chester, Pennsylvania

§3353 Most people believe that when the Last Judgment comes, everything in the visible universe will be destroyed—the earth will burn up, the sun and moon will dissolve, the stars will vanish—and then a new sky and new earth will materialize. Revelation and prophecy describing such events have given them this view, but the real case is quite different, as shown by previous remarks concerning the Last Judgment, at §§900, 931, 1850, 2117–2133. These sections show that the Last Judgment is simply the end of the church in one nation and its beginning in another. This end and beginning take place when no one acknowledges the Lord any longer—that is, when faith no longer exists. Acknowledgment or faith comes to an end when neighborly love does, because faith can exist only in people who love their neighbor. Under those circumstances the church dies out and is transferred to other people, as is quite plain from everything the Lord himself taught and prophesied concerning that final era, the close of the age, in the Gospels (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).

[2] Since no one can understand his words there without the key of the inner meaning, let me reveal their contents bit by bit, starting here with the following words in Matthew:

The disciples came up to Jesus, saying, “Tell us when these things will happen and what the sign of your coming and of the close of the age will be.” And answering, Jesus said to them, “Watch, to keep anyone from leading you astray! For many will come in my name saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and lead many astray. But you are sure to hear wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled! Because it all has to happen, but it is not yet the end. For nation will be roused against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines and plagues and earthquakes in various places. But all these things will be the beginning of woes.” (Matthew 24:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

People who cling to the literal meaning cannot tell whether these verses and the ones that follow in Matthew 24 have to do with the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jewish nation or with the cataclysm called the Last Judgment. People who focus on the inner meaning, on the other hand, see clearly that the passage is

talking about the end of the church, which is referred to here and elsewhere as the Lord's Coming and the close of the age. Since the end of the church is meant, you can see that all the elements symbolize aspects of religion. The specific symbolism is indicated by the particulars of the inner meaning.

In the sentence *Many will come in my name saying, "I am the Christ," and lead many astray*, the *name* does not mean a name, nor does *Christ* mean Christ. The *name* symbolizes a means of worshiping the Lord (§§2724, 3006), and *Christ* symbolizes truth itself (§§3009, 3010). So it means that people will come saying, "This is what faith teaches"—or "This is true"—when it is neither a tenet of faith nor true but false.

You are sure to hear wars and rumors of wars means that arguments and disputes over truth will arise, these being wars in a spiritual sense.

Nation will be roused against nation, and kingdom against kingdom means that evil will fight with evil, and falsity with falsity. To see that a *nation* means goodness and, in an opposite sense, evil, review §§1259, 1260, 1416, 1849; and to see that a *kingdom* means truth and, in an opposite sense, falsity, §§1672, 2547. *There will be famines and plagues and earthquakes in various places* means that no one will know about goodness and truth any longer and the state of religion will therefore change, this change being the earthquakes.

[§3354] These remarks show what the Lord's words refer to: the first stage in the corruption of the church, when people start to forget what is good and true and quarrel about it, which gives rise to falsity. Since this is the first stage, the text says *it is not yet the end and these are the beginning of woes*. It calls this stage *earthquakes in various places*, which on an inner level symbolizes a partial or initial change in the church's condition. The fact that the message is addressed to the disciples means that it is addressed to everyone in the church, because those are the ones the twelve disciples represented (§§2089, 2129, 2130). That is why it says [in the plural], "*Watch, to keep anyone from leading you astray,*" and "*You are sure to hear wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not troubled!*"

§3355 The inner meaning of an *earthquake* as a change in the church's condition stands out from the symbolism of the *earth* as the church (discussed in §§566, 662, 1066, 1068, 1262, 1733, 1850, 2117, 2118, 2928) and from that of a *quaking* as a change in state—here, a change in regard to traits of the church, or goodness and truth. The same thing becomes clear from other places in the Word, such as Isaiah:

It will happen that one fleeing from a horrifying sound will fall into the pit, and one climbing out of the middle of the pit will be caught in the snare. For the floodgates in the heights opened, and *the earth's foundations shook; the earth was shattered* utterly; *the earth quaked* violently; *the earth totters* helplessly like a drunkard. It *sways* like a shack, and its transgression weighs on *it*, and it will fall and never rise again. And it will happen on that day that Jehovah will punish the army of the heights on high, and the monarchs of the *ground* down on the *ground*. (Isaiah 24:18, 19, 20, [21])

Obviously the earth means the church, because the passage is talking about the church. Its foundations are said to shake and the church itself is said to shatter, quake, totter, and sway when people no longer recognize goodness and truth. The monarchs of the ground are true ideas, although here they are false ideas, which will incur punishment. For the meaning of kings as truth and in an opposite sense falsity, see §§1672, 2015. Like the earth, the ground means the church, but with a difference; see §§566, 1068.

[2] By the same author:

I will render humankind more rare than pure gold, and humanity [more rare] than Ophir's gold. Therefore I will shake heaven, and *the earth will quake out of its place*, in the outrage of Jehovah Sabaoth and on the day when his anger blazes up. (Isaiah 13:12, 13)

This is about Judgment Day. Here too the earth clearly stands for the church, which is said to quake out of its place when its state changes. To see that a place means a state, review §§1273, 1274, 1275, 1377, 2625, 2837. By the same author:

Is this the man *shaking* the earth, shaking *kingdoms*? He makes the world a wilderness, and its cities he destroys. (Isaiah 14:16, 17)

The subject here is Lucifer. The earth stands for the church, which he is said to shake when he claims all its attributes as his own. Kingdoms are the truth known to the church; see §§1672, 2547.

[3] In Ezekiel:

It will happen on that day, [on the day] Gog comes over the *land of Israel*, that my wrath will rise up in my anger; and in my zeal, in the fire of my outrage I will speak: “If on that day there is not a big *earthquake* on Israel’s *soil* . . .!” (Ezekiel 38:18, 19, 20)

Gog stands for outward worship separated from inward and so made idolatrous (§1151). Israel’s land and soil stand for a spiritual religion. The earthquake stands for a change in its state. In Joel:

Before him *the earth quaked*, the heavens trembled, the sun and moon turned black, and the stars withdrew their rays. (Joel 2:10)

This too is about the day of the Last Judgment. The quaking earth stands for changed conditions in the church. The sun and moon stand for a loving goodness and the truth it leads to (§§1529, 1530, 2441, 2495), which are said to turn black when people no longer acknowledge goodness or truth. Stars stand for a knowledge of what is good and true (§§2495, 2849). In David:

The earth shook and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains quivered and shook, because [anger] blazed in him. (Psalms 18:7, 8)

The shaking, quaking earth stands for the church's state when it has been corrupted.

[4] In John:

Furthermore, I looked as [the lamb] opened the sixth seal, when here, a *huge earthquake occurred!* And the sun turned black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell onto the earth. (Revelation 6:12, 13)

The earthquake, sun, moon, and stars symbolize the same thing they do above in Joel. By the same author:

In that hour, a *huge earthquake occurred*, and a tenth of the city fell, and in the *earthquake* the names of seven thousand people fell dead. (Revelation 11:13)

All these passages show that an earthquake simply means a change in the church's condition and that in an inner sense the land means the church. Since it does, plainly the new sky and new earth that were to take the place of the old ones (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Revelation 21:1) mean nothing but a new church on inner and outer planes (§§1733, 1850, 2117, 2118).

[§3356] A quake means a change in condition because it occurs within space and time, and in the other world there is no concept of space or time but of state instead. Everything in the next life does appear to occupy space and to progress in time, but in and of themselves these are changes in state, because they result from such changes. All spirits are well aware of this fact—even evil ones, who impose changes of state on others to make it look as though they are present in places where they are not. People on earth can recognize the same thing by considering that the more joy we have from being in our element, and the more absentminded we are because of being absorbed in thought, the more slender our connection with time. Many hours then seem like barely one. Our inner self, or spirit, experiences states, to which the space and time of our outer self

correspond. So a quake, since it moves forward through space and time, in an inner sense means changed conditions.

[§3486] An explanation of the Lord's words in Matthew 24:3–7 predicting the close of the age, or final days of the church, was prefixed to the last chapter, Genesis 26, in §§3353–3356 there. Now, with the Lord's divine mercy, let me explain the words that follow next in verses 8–14 of the same chapter in that Gospel:

All these things will be the beginning of woes. Then they will hand you over to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations because of my name. And many will then stumble and betray each other and hate each other. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the multiplying of wickedness, many people's charity will go cold. But those persisting to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited [earth] for testimony to all the nations. And then will be the end.

[§3487] The previous verses, explained in §§3353–3356, described the first stage in the corruption of the church, which was to occur when people began to forget what was good and true and quarreled about it. This would lead to falsities. The verses here, though, describe the second stage of the church's corruption, in which people will despise and oppose what is good and true, and faith in the Lord will gradually die out as neighborly love comes to an end.

[§3488] The inner meaning makes it clear that these words of the Lord's in the Gospel describe the second stage in the corruption of the church. This is the inner meaning:

All these things will be the beginning of woes symbolizes what has already been said about the first stage in the church's ruination: People started to forget what was good and true and quarreled about it, which led to falsities and heresies. This

corrupted the religion many centuries ago, it is plain, since the church in the Christian world split, and opinions about goodness and truth are what drove the split. So you can see that the [Christian] church's decay began a long time ago.

[2] *Then they will hand you over to tribulation and kill you* means that goodness and truth will be destroyed—first by *tribulation*, or by being corrupted, and then by being *killed*, or denied. In relation to goodness and truth, killing is failing to accept and therefore denying; see §§3387, 3395. *You*, the apostles, symbolize all aspects of faith taken as a whole and accordingly both the good it embraces and the truth it teaches. For this symbolism of the twelve apostles, see §§577, 2089, 2129, 2130, 3272, 3354. The fact that they symbolize such things is obvious here, because the topic under discussion is not a prediction concerning the apostles but the close of the age.

[3] *And you will be hated by all the nations because of my name* symbolizes contempt for and opposition to everything good and true. *Hating* means feeling contempt for and opposing, because these are facets of hatred. *By all the nations* means by people engaged in evil. For this meaning of nations, see §§1259, 1260, 1849, 1868, 2588. *Because of my name* means because of the Lord and therefore because of everything that comes from him. The Lord's name means everything by which he is worshiped—everything in his church—taken as a whole; see §§2724, 3006.

[4] *And many will then stumble and betray each other and hate each other* symbolizes different kinds of antagonism because of all this. *Many will stumble* means the antagonism itself, which is aimed at the Lord's true humanity. The Word predicts in various places that his [divine] humanity will be a stumbling block and impediment [Isaiah 8:14, 15; Matthew 21:42–44; 26:31; Luke 20:17–18]. *They will betray each other* means mutual hostility sparked by falsity's opposition to truth; *and hate each other* means mutual hostility sparked by evil's opposition to goodness.

[5] *And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray* symbolizes the preaching of falsity. *False prophets* mean people who teach falsity, and their false

teachings; see §2534. *And lead many astray* means that this preaching will produce further falsity.

[6] *And because of the multiplying of wickedness, many people's charity will go cold* means that charity, or love for others, passes away when faith does. *Because of the multiplying of wickedness* means in proportion to the falsity in one's faith. *Many people's charity will go cold* means the death of charity. The two go hand in hand, because where faith is absent, charity is absent, and where charity is absent, so is faith. Love for others is what welcomes faith, and a lack of love for others is what rejects faith. This is the source of all falsity and evil.

[7] *But those persisting to the end will be saved* symbolizes the salvation of people who love their neighbor. *Those persisting to the end* means those who do not let themselves be led astray, who do not give way in times of trial.

[8] *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited [earth] for testimony to all the nations* means that the Christian world will learn it first. *It will be preached* means it will become known. *This gospel of the kingdom* means the truth of this, the gospel meaning a proclamation and a kingdom meaning truth. (To see that a kingdom means truth, review §§1672, 2547). *In the whole inhabited earth* means the Christian world. The earth means the area where the church exists, so it means the Christian world; see §§662, 1066, 1068, 1262, 1733, 1850, 2117, 2118, 2928, 3355. The church is described as inhabited here because of its religious life, or in other words, because of the good that results from its truth. In an inner sense, inhabiting means living, and residents mean the good that comes of truth (§§1293, 2268, 2451, 2712, 3384). *For testimony* means in order to let people know, so that they cannot feign ignorance. *To all the nations* means to the evil (§§1259, 1260, 1849, 1868, 2588), because when people wallow in falsity and evil, they no longer know what is true and good. Under those circumstances, they believe falsity to be true and evil to be good, and vice versa. When the church reaches this stage, *then will come the end*. The words that follow these—to be explained just before the next chapter of Genesis, by the Lord's divine mercy—deal with a church's third stage, called a ruinous abomination.

[§3489] People in the church do not see that the church is like this—despising and opposing everything good and true, and harboring antagonism toward goodness and truth and especially toward the Lord. They go to church, listen to sermons, maintain an air of reverence while there, attend Holy Supper, occasionally talking with each other about these activities in a perfectly appropriate way, regardless of whether they are bad or good; and they live together in polite kindness or friendship. As a result, they never see any evidence of contempt, let alone opposition, least of all hostility, toward what faith values as good and true or toward the Lord. However, these are the outward forms of conduct by which one person misleads another. The inward forms among people in the church are completely different and are even diametrically opposed to the outward ones. The inward forms are the ones depicted here and are the ones that have this character. The nature of the inward forms is vividly apparent in the heavens, because angels pay attention only to people’s inner depths, or their goals—that is, to their intent and will and their resulting thoughts. The extent of the discrepancy between these and superficial appearances can be seen from people coming into the other life from the Christian world; to learn about them, see §§2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126.

[2] In the next life, we think and speak only in accord with our inner values, because we left outward appearances behind with our bodies. No matter how peace-loving such people seemed in this world, in the next it is clear that they hated each other and also hated everything involved in faith. Most of all they hated the Lord. When anyone simply mentions him to their face in the other world, a palpable wave not only of contempt but even of opposition and antagonism toward him pours from them and spreads outward—even if they kept up appearances by speaking and also preaching reverently about him. The same thing happens when neighborly love and faith are mentioned. That is what they are like inside, and in the other world their inner form is as plain to see as it would have been while they were living in the world if they had been released and freed from outward constraints. In the world they feared for their life and feared the law. Most of all they feared for their reputation, which brought them the high rank they were aiming and competing for and the riches they envied and eagerly sought. Without these constraints, they would have attacked one another with mutual hatred, as they were actually attempting and planning to do. They would have robbed others

without a single pang of conscience and butchered them—especially the innocent—again without a pang of conscience. That is what today’s Christians are like inside, except for a few souls unknown to them. From this it is clear what the church is like.

§3650 The preliminaries to the previous chapter, Genesis 27, explained what the Lord taught in Matthew 24:8–14 when he predicted the Last Judgment, or the church’s last days (§§3486–3489). Here before the upcoming chapter I need to continue the pattern by explaining what comes next, in Matthew 24:15, 16, 17, 18:

So when you see the ruinous abomination (told of by Daniel the prophet) standing in the holy place—reader, take note!—then those in Judea should flee into the mountains. Those on the roof of the house should not go down to take anything from their house. And those in the field should not turn back behind to take their garment.

§3651 Anyone can see that these words hold secrets. Unless the secrets are revealed, no one can possibly know what is meant by the command for those in Judea to flee into the mountains, those on the roof of the house not to go down to take anything from the house, and those in the field not to turn back behind to take their garment. Without the inner meaning to teach them what these images symbolize and involve, the Word’s critics and translators could be misled and fall into outlandish opinions about it. In fact those who at heart deny the Word’s holiness could also conclude that such words describe only flight and escape in the face of an enemy, so that the text contains nothing holier. The reality is that with these words the Lord gives a comprehensive picture of a state in which the church is purged of any love for goodness or belief in truth. The following explanation will demonstrate this meaning.

§3652 According to the inner meaning:

So when you see the ruinous abomination symbolizes the purging of the church. This purging or devastation takes place when people no longer acknowledge the Lord

(and so do not love or believe in him), no longer show any charity toward their neighbor, and consequently have no goodness or truth in their faith. In the church, or more precisely in regions where the Word exists, these traits take hold in people's private thoughts (though not in their public theology), and then comes ruin. The traits mentioned are the abomination of that ruin. "When you see the ruinous abomination," therefore, means when anyone observes these signs. The steps such a person then needs to take follow in verses 16, 17, 18.

[2] *Told of by Daniel the prophet* in an inner sense means by the prophets. When the Word refers to a prophet by name, it does not mean that prophet but the Word's actual prophetic parts. Names never penetrate to heaven (§§1876, 1888). Still, one prophet does not symbolize the same thing as another. For the symbolism of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, see the preface to Genesis 18 and §2762. Daniel symbolizes all prophecy about the Lord's Coming and about the church's state—here, its final state. The prophets have a lot to say about devastation. In the literal sense of those discussions, the devastation means the destruction of the religion of Judah and Israel, but on an inner level it symbolizes the destruction of religion as a whole, and this is true of the devastation that now looms.

[3] *Standing in the holy place* means being purged of everything connected with goodness and truth. The holy place is the state of love and faith. In an inner sense, a place means a state (see §§2625, 2837, 3356, 3387). The holiness of that state is the good that we love and the truth we therefore believe. Holy things in the Word have no other meaning, because goodness and truth come from the Lord, who is holiness itself, or the sanctuary itself.

Reader, take note means that people in the church—especially those with love and faith (the people discussed here)—need to observe these things carefully.

[4] *Then those in Judea shall flee into the mountains* means that people in the church will rely on the Lord alone and accordingly on love for him and charity for their neighbor. Judea symbolizes the church, as will be shown below. A mountain symbolizes

the Lord himself, but mountains in the plural symbolize love for him and charity for one's neighbor; see §§795, 796, 1430, 2722. Taken literally, this prophecy would mean that if Jerusalem were besieged—as it actually was by the Romans—people would run not to the city but onto the mountains, in accord with these words in Luke:

When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that devastation is near. Then let those in Judea flee onto the mountains, and those in its midst leave; but those in the territories should not enter it. (Luke 21:20, 21)

[5] It is the same with Jerusalem here; literally, it means Jerusalem, but in an inner sense it means the Lord's church (see §§402, 2117).

Each and every mention of the people of Judah and Israel in the Word represents the Lord's kingdom in the heavens and the Lord's kingdom on earth, or the church, as shown many times. That is why Jerusalem never means Jerusalem and Judea never means Judea in an inner sense. Instead they were something that could (and did) represent the heavenly and spiritual qualities of the Lord's kingdom. This made it possible for the Word to be written in such a way that people reading it on earth could grasp it and the angels present with them could truly understand it. The Lord spoke in the same way for the same reason. Had it been otherwise, the message would not have been suited to the grasp of readers—especially at that time—or to the comprehension of angels; people would not have accepted it, and angels would not have understood it.

[6] *Those on the roof of the house should not go down to take anything from their house* means that people motivated by the good impulses of neighborly love were not to turn from that to matters of religious doctrine. In the Word, the roof of a house symbolizes a higher state in us, or a state of goodness. What is below symbolizes a lower state in us, or a state of truth. For the meaning of a house, see §§710, 1708, 2233, 3142, 3538. Here is the case with the state of people in the church: When they are being reborn, they learn truth for the sake of goodness, because they desire truth as a means to goodness. When the process of rebirth is complete, though, they act on both truth and goodness. Having reached this stage, they ought not to return to the previous one. If

they did, they would use truth to debate the goodness in which they live, corrupting their state. All debate ends, as it should, when we reach a stage in which we will what is true and good. At that point we base our thoughts and deeds on our will and so on conscience, not on our intellect, as we did before. If we resort to intellect again, we fall prey to trials in which we fail. That is the meaning of “Those on the roof of the house should not go down to take anything from their house.”

[7] *And those in the field should not turn back behind to take their garment* (their coat) means that likewise people motivated by the good that truth advocates were not to turn from that aspect of truth to doctrinal truth. In the Word, a field symbolizes this state of goodness in a person. (For the meaning of a field, see §§368, 2971, 3196, 3310, 3317, 3500, 3508.) A garment or coat symbolizes that which clothes goodness, or in other words, doctrinal truth, because this is like a garment for goodness. (For this meaning of a garment, see §§297, 1073, 2576, 3301.) Anyone can see that a deeper message than appears in the letter lies hidden in these words, since the Lord himself spoke them.

[§3653] These considerations now show that the verses offer a comprehensive picture of a state in which the church is purged of any love for goodness or belief in truth, and that the passage calls on people with that love and belief to take the next, necessary steps. There are three kinds of people in the church: those with love for the Lord, those with charity for their neighbor, and those with a desire for truth. *Those in Judea shall flee into the mountains* specifically symbolizes people in the first category—those with love for the Lord. *Those on the roof of the house should not go down to take anything from their house* symbolizes those in the second category, with charity for their neighbor. *Those in the field should not turn back behind to take their garment* symbolizes those in the third category, with a desire for truth. See previous remarks and explanations of this in §2454 of the third volume, where the meaning of turning back behind and looking back behind oneself is also given.

[§3654] In the Word’s inner meaning, Judea does not mean Judea, and Jerusalem does not mean Jerusalem, and many scriptural passages can illustrate this

fact. The Word speaks more often in terms of the land of Judah than of Judea. Like the land of Canaan it symbolizes the Lord's kingdom and consequently the church (since the church is the Lord's kingdom on earth). Judah, or the Jewish nation, represented the Lord's heavenly kingdom, while Israel, or the Israelite people, symbolized his spiritual kingdom, and since this is what they represented, it is all they mean in the inner sense of the Word wherever they are mentioned.

[2] What later sections say about Judah and the land of Judah will establish this symbolism, by the Lord's divine mercy. Meanwhile, these few passages from the prophets will do. In Isaiah:

My beloved had a vineyard on a horn of the offspring of oil. He surrounded it and de-stoned it and planted it with a choice grapevine and built a tower in the middle of it and also hollowed out a winepress in it and waited for it to produce grapes; but it produced wild grapes. And now, *resident of Jerusalem* and *man of Judah*, judge, please, between me and my vineyard. I will make it a *ruin*; for Jehovah Sabaoth's vineyard is the *house of Israel*, and the *man of Judah* is his delightful plant. And he waited for judgment, but look: an abscess! For justice, but look: an outcry! (Isaiah 5:1, 2, 3, 6, 7)

The literal meaning of this passage concerns the corrupt state of the Israelites and Jews, but the inner meaning concerns the corrupt state of the church that Israel and Judah represented. The resident of Jerusalem means goodness in the church—a resident meaning goodness or, to put it another way, people with goodness (see §§2268, 2451, 2712, 3613), and Jerusalem meaning the church (§§402, 2117). The house of Israel has the same meaning, a house standing for goodness (§§710, 1708, 2233, 3142, 3538) and Israel, for the church (§3305). The same is true of the man of Judah, since a man symbolizes truth (§§265, 749, 1007, 3134, 3310, 3459) and Judah symbolizes goodness. The difference is that the man of Judah means truth deriving from the good we do out of love for the Lord (called heavenly truth), or people with that truth.

[3] By the same author:

He will lift up a banner for the nations and assemble the *exiles of Israel*, and the *scattered elements of Judah* he will gather from the four wings of the earth. Then Ephraim's envy will withdraw, and *Judah's foes* will be cut off. Ephraim will not show envy toward *Judah*, and *Judah* will not assail Ephraim. Jehovah will exterminate the tongue of Egypt's sea. And he will wave his hand over the river in the fierceness of his breath. Then there will be a path for the survivors of his people who will remain from Assyria. (Isaiah 11:12, 13, 15, 16)

In its literal meaning, this passage tells about the return of the Israelites and Jews from their captivity. In its inner meaning it has to do in general with a new religion and in particular with everyone who is regenerating, or becoming a church. The exiles of Israel stand for the truth such people know; the scattered elements of Judah, for the goodness they show. Ephraim stands for their intellect, which will no longer rebel. Egypt stands for secular knowledge, and Assyria, for reasoning based on that knowledge, which they corrupted. The exiles, scattered elements, survivors, and remainder stand for the truth and goodness left standing. The meaning of Ephraim as the intellect will become clear elsewhere [§5354]. For the meaning of Egypt as secular knowledge, see §§1164, 1165, 1462, 1186, 2588, 3325. For that of Assyria as reasoning, §§119, 1186. And for that of survivors or a remnant as the good impulses and true thoughts the Lord stores away in our inner self, §§468, 530, 560, 561, 660, 661, 798, 1050, 1738, 1906, 2284.

[4] By the same author:

Listen to this, house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of *Israel* (and *they issued from the waters of Judah*), because after the holy city they are called, and on the God of Israel they lean. (Isaiah 48:1, 2)

The waters of Judah stand for truth that develops from the good we do out of love for the Lord. That truth is itself the good of neighborly love, which is called spiritual good. Spiritual good makes a spiritual religion, whose inner depths are Israel and whose

outer surface is the house of Jacob. This clarifies what is symbolized by “the house of Jacob who are called by the name of Israel” and “from the waters of Judah they issued.”

[5] By the same author:

From Jacob I will produce seed, and *from Judah, the heir to my mountains*; and the ones I have chosen will own it, and my servants will live there. (Isaiah 65:9)

In its highest sense, the heir of [Jehovah’s] mountains, from Judah, stands for the Lord. In a representative sense it stands for people who love him and are therefore devoted to the good done by both kinds of love. Mountains mean that goodness, as shown above at §3652.

[6] In Moses:

A lion’s cub is *Judah*; fueled by prey you have risen, my son. He crouched; he lay like a lion and like an aging lion. Who will rouse him? (Genesis 49:9)

Obviously in the highest sense Judah means the Lord here, and in a representative sense it means people motivated by the good that goes with love for him. In David:

When Israel came out from Egypt—the house of Jacob, from a barbarous people—*Judah became [God’s] sanctuary*; Israel, his ruling power. (Psalms 114:1, 2)

Again Judah stands for heavenly goodness, which is the goodness of loving the Lord, and Israel, for heavenly truth, or spiritual goodness.

[7] In Jeremiah:

“Look! The days are coming,” says Jehovah, “when I will raise up for *David* a just offshoot who will reign as monarch and prosper and exercise judgment and

justice in the land; in his days *Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety*. And this is his name that they will call him: Jehovah our justice.” (Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:15, 16)

This is about the Lord’s Coming. Judah stands for people committed to the good required by love for the Lord; Israel, for those awake to the truth that stems from that good. Judah clearly does not mean Judah, nor does Israel mean Israel, since Judah was *not* saved, and Israel fared no better. Likewise by the same author:

I will bring *Judah* back from *captivity* and *Israel* back from *captivity* and rebuild them as before. (Jeremiah 33:7)

Again, by the same author:

“In those days and in that time,” says Jehovah, “*Israel’s children will come, they and Judah’s children* together; crying along the way they will go, and Jehovah their God they will seek, and Zion they will seek by this way, where their faces [turn].” (Jeremiah 50:4, 5)

By the same author:

In that time they will call *Jerusalem* Jehovah’s throne, and all the nations will be gathered to it because of Jehovah’s name, to *Jerusalem*; they will no longer go after the hardness of their evil heart. In those days the *house of Judah will go toward the house of Israel*, and they will come as one from the land of the north onto the land. (Jeremiah 3:17, 18)

[8] By the same author:

“Look! The days are coming,” says Jehovah, “on which I will sow the *house of Israel* and the *house of Judah* with the seed of human and the seed of animal. And I will strike a new pact with the *house of Israel* and the *house of Judah*. This is the pact that I will strike with the *house of Israel* after those days: I will put my

law in the midst of them, and upon their heart I will write it.” (Jeremiah 31:27, 31, 33)

Obviously it is not Israel (or the house of Israel) that is meant, because its people were scattered among the surrounding nations, never to return from captivity. Neither is Judah (or the house of Judah) meant, then. Instead, on an inner level these symbolize people from the Lord’s spiritual and heavenly kingdoms. They are the ones with whom he makes a new pact, the ones on whose hearts he writes his law. A new pact stands for union with the Lord through goodness (§§665, 666, 1023, 1038, 1864, 1996, 2003, 2021, 2037). The law written on a person’s heart stands for a resulting perception of goodness and truth and also for conscience.

[9] In Joel:

It will happen on that day that the mountains will shower down new wine, and the hills will stream with milk, and *all the brooks of Judah will stream with water*, and a spring will issue from Jehovah’s house and water the river of Shittim. Egypt will become a wasteland, and Edom will become a wilderness of a wasteland, because of violence to the *children of Judah*, whose innocent blood they shed on their land. And *Judah will sit forever* and *Jerusalem* for generation after generation. (Joel 3:18, 19, 20)

Each detail again shows that Judah does not mean Judah, and Jerusalem does not mean Jerusalem. They mean people with reverent love and charity, since these are the people who will sit forever, for generation after generation.

[10] In Malachi:

Watch: I am sending my angel, who will prepare the way before me; and suddenly to his temple will come the Lord, whom you are seeking, and the angel of the covenant, whom you desire. *Then the minha of Judah and Jerusalem will be sweet to Jehovah*, as in the days of old and as in former years. (Malachi 3:1, 4)

This passage describes the Lord's Coming. Clearly Judah's and Jerusalem's minha was not sweet to Jehovah at that time, so Judah and Jerusalem plainly symbolize characteristics of the Lord's church. The same holds true in all other Scripture passages mentioning Judah, Israel, or Jerusalem. This now shows what Judea means in Matthew: the Lord's church. In the current passage it means the church when it has been purged, or devastated.

§3655 The verses preceding this passage in the Gospel dealt with the first and second stages in the corruption of the church. In the first stage, people started to forget what was good and true and quarreled over the question, which gave rise to falsity; see §3354. In the second, people were developing contempt for and opposition to what was good and true, and faith in the Lord was consequently about to die out by degrees as neighborly love came to an end; see §§3487, 3488. The present passage accordingly deals with the third stage, which is one in which the church is stripped of its goodness and truth.

§3751 Before the last chapter, Genesis 28, I explained the Lord's predictions in Matthew 24:15, 16, 17, 18 concerning the last days of the church [§§3650–3655]. To continue the pattern I have to introduce this chapter by explaining the next verses, Matthew 24:19, 20, 21, 22, containing these words:

But alas to those who are pregnant or nursing in those days! Pray, though, that your flight not happen in winter or on the Sabbath. For there will then be great affliction such as there has not been from the beginning of the world until now and will not come to be. And if those days were not shortened, no flesh would be rescued. Yet for the sake of the chosen, those days will be shortened.

§3752 No one can possibly understand what these words mean without the light shed by the inner meaning. They do not refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, as is apparent from much of the chapter. Take these words: "If those days were not

shortened, no flesh would be rescued, yet for the sake of the chosen, those days will be shortened.” Consider later verses, too: “After the affliction of those days, the sun will go dark, and the moon will not shed its light; and the stars will fall down from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then will appear the sign of the Son of Humankind, and they will see the Son of Humankind coming in the clouds of the sky with strength and glory” [Matthew 24:29, 30]. There are other examples as well. The verses above also do not refer to the end of the world, and many parts of the same chapter make this clear, too, such as these words earlier on: “People who are then on top of the house should not go down to take anything from their house, and those in the field should not turn back behind to take their clothes” [Matthew 24:20]. From the verses just now quoted: “Pray that your flight not happen in winter or on the Sabbath.” And from what follows: “Two will then be in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two grinding; one will be taken, the other left” [Matthew 24:40, 41]. Clearly the passage is about the last days of the church, or its devastation. The church is said to be devastated when it no longer has any neighborly love.

[§3753] Anyone who thinks reverently about the Lord, believing that he possessed divinity and spoke in divine terms, can see and believe that these words apply to the whole human race rather than one nation, and to its spiritual rather than its worldly condition. The same is true of everything else he taught and said. The Lord’s words embraced the affairs of his kingdom and the church, because these are divine and eternal. People who believe this conclude that “Alas to those who are pregnant or nursing in those days” is not about people who are pregnant or nursing. They figure out that “Pray that your flight not happen in winter or on the Sabbath” is not about any flight from worldly foes; and so on.

[§3754] The previous verses spoke of three stages in the corruption of goodness and truth in the church. The current passage speaks of a fourth and final stage. In the first stage, people started to forget what was good and true and quarreled about it, which gave rise to falsity; see §3354. In the second, people were developing contempt for and opposition to what was good and true, and faith in the Lord was consequently about to die out by degrees as neighborly love came to an end; see §§3487, 3488. In the third,

the church was stripped of its goodness and truth; see §§3651, 3652. The present verses accordingly focus on a fourth stage, in which goodness and truth are profaned. The fact that such a stage is depicted here can be seen from the inner meaning of the individual words, which is as follows.

[§3755] *But alas to those who are pregnant and nursing in those days* symbolizes people steeped in the good that comes of love for the Lord and the good that comes of innocence. “Alas” is a term symbolizing the danger of eternal damnation. Being pregnant means conceiving the good associated with heavenly love. Nursing means also conceiving a state of innocence. “Those days” symbolize states the church is in.

[2] *Pray, though, that your flight not happen in winter or on the Sabbath* means withdrawal from such things and prayer that this not happen too suddenly in a state of excessive cold or excessive heat. Flight means withdrawal from a state marked by the good that comes of love and of innocence, mentioned just above. Flight in winter means withdrawal from those things in a state of excessive cold, the cold being a distaste for them generated by different kinds of self-love. Flight on the Sabbath means withdrawal from them in a state of excessive heat, the heat being a sanctity that appears on the outside when self-love and materialism lie inside.

[3] *For there will then be great affliction such as there has not been from the beginning of the world until now and will not come to be* means corrupting and destroying goodness and truth in the church to the utmost, which is profanation. Profanation of what is holy brings on eternal death in a form much worse than that incurred by any other state of evil. The deeper the goodness and truth being profaned, the worse the death. The Christian church has been explicitly aware of these deeper levels of goodness and truth and profaned them, so the text says, “Then there will be great affliction such as there has not been from the beginning of the world until now and will not come to be.”

[4] *And if those days were not shortened, no flesh would be rescued; yet for the sake of the chosen, those days will be shortened* means drawing people in the church

away from deeper levels of goodness and truth to shallower levels so that those who live good, true lives can still be saved. The shortening of the days symbolizes the condition of being drawn away. No flesh being rescued means that otherwise no one could be saved. The chosen symbolize people who live good, true lives.

§3756 It would be possible to demonstrate convincingly that this is the inner meaning of the words—that pregnant women symbolize people who at first adopt goodness; that women nursing babies symbolize those who adopt a state of innocence; that flight symbolizes withdrawal from such things; that winter symbolizes a distaste for those types of goodness, rising out of deeply ingrained self-love; and that flight on the Sabbath symbolizes profanation, which occurs when sanctity appears on the outside but self-love and materialism lurk inside. However, since the same words and phrases come up from time to time in later chapters, it will be shown there that this is their symbolism, the Lord in his divine mercy willing.

§3757 Few know what the profanation of holy things is, but it can be seen from previous discussions and explanations of the subject, which you are invited to review:

People who know, acknowledge, and absorb what is good and true are capable of committing profanation; not so those who do not acknowledge, let alone those who do not know (§§593, 1008, 1010, 1059, 3398).

Consequently, people in the church are capable of profaning what is holy, but those who are outside it are not (§2051).

Those who are part of a heavenly religion are able to profane sacred goodness; those who are part of a spiritual religion are able to profane sacred truth (§3399).

So inner truth was not disclosed to the Jews, to prevent them from profaning it (§3398).

Non-Christians are the least capable of all of committing profanation (§2051).

Profanation is an intermingling and binding-together of goodness and evil, truth and falsity (§§1001, 1003, 2426).

Profanation was symbolized by the eating of blood, which was so strictly forbidden in the Jewish religion (§1003).

Accordingly, people are kept as far as possible from acknowledging and believing in goodness and truth unless they can hold on to them permanently (§§3398, 3402). For this reason they are kept in ignorance (§§301, 302, 303). For the same reason their worship turns shallow (§§1327, 1328).

Deep truth is not revealed until the church has been devastated, because then goodness and truth can no longer be profaned (§§3398, 3399).

So that is when the Lord first came into the world (§3398).

How dangerous it is to profane what is holy or to desecrate the Word (§§571, 582).

[§3897] In keeping with the set pattern, this chapter will be prefaced by an explanation of the Lord's teachings in Matthew 24 about the Last Judgment, or the church's last days. The preamble to the last chapter explained the contents of Matthew 24:19–22. Those of Matthew 24:23–28 follow here:

Then if anyone says to you, "Look: here is the Christ!" or "There!" you are not to believe it. Because false Christs and false prophets will arise and do great signs and portents, to lead astray, if possible, even the chosen. Here, I've told you beforehand. So if they say to you, "Look: he's in the wilderness!" you are not to go out; "Look: he's in the inner rooms!" you are not to believe it. Because as the lightning issues from the east and is seen all the way to the west, so also will be

the coming of the Son of Humankind. For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles also gather.

[§3898] Without the lessons of the inner meaning, no one can know what these words involve. What does it mean, for instance, that false Christs would arise to do signs and portents? That if they said the Christ was in the wilderness, [the disciples] were not to go out? That if they said he was in the inner rooms, they were not to believe it? That the coming of the Son of Humankind would be like the lightning that issues from the east and is seen all the way to the west? Or that where the carcass is, there the eagles will gather? These words, like those that come before and after them in Matthew 24, seem to exhibit no logical sequence in their literal meaning, but in their inner meaning they show an exquisite progression. This progression first comes to view when we understand the symbolism of false Christs, signs and portents, the wilderness and inner rooms, the coming of the Son of Humankind, and a carcass and eagles.

[2] The Lord spoke this way in order to keep people from understanding his words, for fear they would profane them. If they had understood the message when the church was spiritually devastated (as it was among the Jews at that time), they would have profaned it. So for the same reason the Lord also spoke in parables, as he himself teaches in Matthew 13:13, 14, 15; Mark 4:11, 12; Luke 8:10. The Word cannot be profaned by those who do not know its mysteries, only by those who do (see §§301, 302, 303, 593, 1008, 1010, 1059, 1327, 1328, 2051, 3398, 3402). It is profaned more by those who see themselves as scholars than by those who see themselves as non-scholars.

[3] The reason the Word's inner depths are being laid open now is that the church today is devastated. It has been so nearly stripped of faith and love that even though people know and understand [the truth] they do not acknowledge let alone believe it (see §§3398, 3399). The only exceptions are the few living a good life who are called the chosen. They can now be educated, and a new religion is to be established among them. Only the Lord knows where they are. Not many will come from within the church. It is among people outside the church that new religions have been set up before (see §2986).

[§3899] The previous verses of Matthew 24 had to do with the cumulative devastation of the church. First people would start to forget what was good and true and would quarrel over it; then they would despise it; in the third place they would refuse to acknowledge it; and in the fourth they would profane it (see §3754). Now the text discusses what the condition of the church is like in respect to its theology at that stage, in general and among certain people in particular. These are the people who engage in worship that is outwardly reverent but inwardly profane, who proclaim the Lord in holy adoration with their lips but worship themselves and the world at heart. For them, devotion to the Lord is a means of winning high position and riches. The more they have acknowledged the Lord, the life of heaven, and faith, the more they profane these things when they do profane. This is the state of the church presently under discussion, as stands out more clearly from the inner meaning of the Lord's words quoted above. The meaning is this:

[§3900] *Then if anyone says to you, "Look: here is the Christ!" or "There!" you are not to believe it* symbolizes a warning to watch out for such people's theology. The *Christ* means the Lord in regard to divine truth and therefore in regard to the Word and teachings from it. In this case it obviously means the opposite: divine truth distorted, or false doctrine. (To see that Jesus means divine goodness, and Christ, divine truth, review §§3004, 3005, 3008, 3009.)

[2] *Because false Christs and false prophets will arise* symbolizes the falsities in that theology. *False Christs* are falsified teachings from the Word, or truth that is not godly, as the remarks just above show (and see §§3010, 3732). *False prophets* are people who teach those falsities (§2534). The main people teaching falsity in the Christian world are those who make self-aggrandizement and worldly wealth their goal. They twist scriptural truth to promote their own interest, because when love for ourselves and the world forms our goal, we think of nothing else. These are false Christs and false prophets.

[3] *And do great signs and portents* symbolizes proofs and persuasions based on shallow, misleading appearances, which the unsophisticated allow to dupe them. This

meaning of *doing signs and portents* will be demonstrated elsewhere, with the Lord's divine mercy [§§6870, 7012, 7273, 7633, 7795].

[4] *To lead astray, if possible, even the chosen* means leading astray people who live a life of goodness and truth and therefore live in the Lord. They are the ones the Word calls *chosen*. Such people rarely appear in company with those who hide their profane worship under a sanctimonious veil, and if the former do appear with the latter, the former are not recognized. The Lord protects them by concealing them, since until they solidify their thinking, they readily allow outward piety to lead them astray. After they solidify it, they stand fast. The Lord keeps them in the company of angels, unbeknownst to them, and then it is impossible for that unspeakable crowd to rope them in.

[5] *Here, I've told you beforehand* symbolizes encouragement to use caution and watch out, because such people live among false prophets who appear in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15). These false prophets are the "children of this age" who are more prudent (more cunning) than the children of light in their generation (as described in Luke 16:8). Accordingly the Lord encourages them with these words:

"Here, I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. So be shrewd as snakes and simple as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

[6] *So if they say to you, "Look: he's in the wilderness!" you are not to go out; "Look: he's in the inner rooms!" you are not to believe it* means that no one should believe what they say about truth or about goodness, and so on. Only people who know the inner meaning can see that this is the symbolism. They can tell the words hold a secret from the fact that the Lord spoke them. Unless there is another meaning hidden within, these instructions (not to go out if people say the Christ is in the wilderness and not to believe it if they say he is in the inner rooms) are trivial. But a *wilderness* symbolizes truth that has been stripped away, and the *inner rooms* symbolize goodness that has been stripped away. A wilderness symbolizes truth stripped away because when

the church has been devastated—when it no longer contains any divine truth, because it no longer holds any goodness, no love for the Lord or charity for one’s neighbor—it is said to be a wilderness or in a wilderness. A wilderness means any untamed, uninhabited place (§2708) and that which has little life (§1927), and this describes truth in the church at that stage. Clearly, then, the wilderness means a religion lacking in truth.

[7] The inner-level symbolism of inner rooms is goodness in the church, and simply goodness. A church with goodness is called God’s house, and the inner rooms are the goodness and truth in that house. To see that God’s house means divine goodness, and that a house in general means the good that comes of love and charity, review §§2233, 2559, 3142, 3652, 3720. The reason no one should believe what such people say about truth or about goodness is that they call falsity true, and evil, good. People who focus on themselves and the world as their aims take truth and goodness to mean nothing but the need for others to worship and serve them. If they inspire others to true devotion, it is for the purpose of being seen in sheep’s clothing.

[8] Another point: The Word, which the Lord has spoken, teems with inner content, and “wilderness” has a broad range of meaning (since any untamed, uninhabited place is called a wilderness), while all interiors are called inner rooms. So the wilderness also symbolizes the Old Testament Word (since it has been deemed obsolete) and the inner rooms symbolize the New Testament Word (since it teaches about the inner depths, or the inner self). Then too the whole Word is called a wilderness when it no longer serves as doctrine. Human customs are called inner rooms, and since they depart from scriptural commands and customs, they turn the Word into a wilderness, as the Christian world knows. People whose outward show of worship is reverent but whose inward worship is profane nullify the Word for the sake of innovations aimed at making them greater and wealthier than anyone else. They even go so far as to forbid others to read the Word. People whose worship is not so profane may consider the Word holy and allow the common person to have it, but with their interpretations they still bend everything in it to the service of their own doctrines. This practice makes everything else in Scripture—everything that conflicts with their

doctrines—a wilderness. Look at people who ascribe salvation to faith alone and brush off acts of neighborly love. They make a wilderness out of everything the Lord himself said about love and charity in the New Testament and so many times in the Old. They make inner rooms out of everything advocated by faith detached from good deeds. These remarks clarify the meaning of the words *If they say to you, “Look: he’s in the wilderness!” you are not to go out; “Look: he’s in the inner rooms!” you are not to believe it.*

[9] *Because as the lightning issues from the east and is seen all the way to the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Humankind* means that inward worship of the Lord will resemble lightning, which vanishes instantly. *Lightning* symbolizes matters of heavenly light, so it symbolizes attributes of love and faith, since love and faith are matters of heavenly light. In its highest sense, the *east* means the Lord; in a deep sense it means the good yielded by love, charity, and faith received from the Lord (see §§101, 1250, 3249). The *west*, in a deep sense, means that which has set, or ceased to exist, so it means a failure to acknowledge either the Lord or the good yielded by love, charity, and faith. Lightning that issues from the east and is seen all the way to the west, then, means disappearance. The Lord’s Coming will not be his literal reappearance in the world but his presence in every individual. This coming takes place every time the gospel is preached, every time someone thinks about something holy.

[10] *For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles gather* means that arguments supporting falsity will proliferate in the devastated church. When a church lacks the goodness and therefore the truth promoted by faith—when it has been spiritually devastated—it is described as dead, because goodness and truth are its source of life. When it is dead, it is likened to a *carcass*. Arguments to the effect that goodness and truth are not good and true unless we can grasp them are *eagles*, and so is the use of those arguments to justify evil and falsity. The next section will demonstrate this. The meaning of the carcass as a religion lacking the vitality of charity and faith becomes clear from the Lord’s words in Luke describing the close of the age:

The disciples said, “Where, Lord?” [referring to the close of the age, or the Last Judgment.] Jesus said to them, “*Where the body is, there will the eagles gather.*” (Luke 17:37)

“The body” replaces “the carcass” because it means a dead body here. It symbolizes the church, because the Judgment is destined to start with God’s house, or the church, as various passages in the Word show. There you have the symbolism of the Lord’s quoted words, explained in their inner meaning. They follow in an exquisite series, even if the sequence does not show in the literal meaning, and one who ponders their interconnections according to the explanation can see that this is so.

[§3901] The church’s final stage is compared to eagles gathering around a carcass or body because eagles symbolize a person’s rational dimension. In relation to good people they symbolize true reason, but in relation to bad people they symbolize false reason, or sophistry. Birds in general symbolize a person’s thoughts, again in both [positive and negative] senses (§§40, 745, 776, 866, 991:1, 3219), and each species symbolizes something specific. Eagles fly high and have sharp eyes, so they symbolize rationality. This symbolism can be seen from many passages in the Word. Let me quote the following ones for confirmation—first, those in which eagles symbolize true reason. In Moses:

Jehovah found his people in a wilderness land, and in emptiness, lamentation, wastelands. He enveloped them, instructed them, guarded them as the pupil of his eye. *As an eagle stirs its nest*, moves constantly over the chicks, spreads its wings, he takes them, carries them on his wing. (Deuteronomy 32:10, 11)

This passage depicts instruction in religious truth and goodness, using the simile of an eagle. The depiction and the simile cover the whole process to the point where we finally become rational and spiritual. All comparisons in the Word rely on symbolism. This one relies on the symbolism of an eagle as rationality.

[2] By the same author:

Jehovah to Moses: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and *that I carried you on eagles’ wings* to bring you to me.” (Exodus 19:3, 4)

The meaning is similar. In Isaiah:

Those waiting for Jehovah will be renewed with strength, *will rise on a strong wing like eagles*. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire. (Isaiah 40:31)

Being renewed with strength means being increasingly able to will what is good. Rising on a strong wing like eagles means being increasingly able to understand what is true and consequently increasing in rationality. Here as elsewhere, the matter is expressed in two phrases, one involving good in the will, the other involving truth in the intellect. Likewise for running without growing weary and walking without tiring.

[3] In Ezekiel:

Utter a parable about the house of Israel and say, “This is what the Lord Jehovah has said: ‘*A large eagle—long in its feathers, full of plumage, with embroidery—*came upon Lebanon and took a cedar twig, brought it into a land of commerce, put it in a city of perfumers; it sprouted and became a luxuriant grapevine. There was *another large eagle, great of wings and full of plumage, to which—look!—*this grapevine applied its roots. And it sent its stems out to [the eagle, for the eagle] to water it from its planting beds, in a good field, near many waters; but it will be devastated. [Israel’s prince] sent his ambassadors to Egypt [demanding] that it give him horses and a large populace.’” (Ezekiel 17:2–9, 15)

The first eagle mentioned stands for reason enlightened by divinity. The second eagle stands for reason rising out of human selfhood that comes to be corrupted by false arguments based on sense impressions and factual knowledge. Egypt stands for facts (§§1164, 1165, 1186, 1462); horses, for an intellect composed of facts (§§2761, 2762, 3217).

[4] In Daniel:

Daniel's vision: four beasts coming up out of the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, but *it had an eagle's wings*. I was looking, until its wings were ripped off and it was lifted from the earth, and it drew up on its feet like a human, and a human heart was given to it. (Daniel 7:3, 4)

The lion with an eagle's wings depicts the first stage of a religion, the eagle wings meaning rationality that rises out of human selfhood. When that rationality is taken away, we receive rationality and a will from the Deity, and this is symbolized by the beast's rising from the earth, drawing up like a human on its feet, and being given a human heart.

[5] In Ezekiel:

The likeness of the faces of the four living creatures, or guardian beings: the face of a human, and the face of a lion on the right for the four of them, and the face of an ox on the left for the four of them, and the *face of an eagle* for the four of them. (Ezekiel 1:10)

Their wheels were called Galgal, and each had four faces; the first face was the face of a guardian being, and the second face was the face of a human, and the third was the face of a lion, and the fourth face the *face of an eagle*. (Ezekiel 10:13, 14)

In John:

Around the throne were four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind; the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature having a face like a human, the fourth living creature *like a flying eagle*. (Revelation 4:[6,] 7)

Plainly the living creatures in these visions have some unknown, divine symbolism, so the likeness of their faces does too. Just what the secret meaning is cannot be seen unless the inner meaning of the lion, calf, human, and eagle is known. The eagle's face obviously means watchfulness and therefore prudence, because the guardian beings (portrayed as animals in Ezekiel) symbolize the Lord's providence making sure we do not rely on ourselves and our own rationality in exploring religious mysteries (see §308). So of course when an eagle is mentioned in reference to a human being, in an inner sense it means rationality. The reason for an eagle's symbolism is that it flies high, looking down from above on a wide area below.

[6] In Job:

Is it owing to your intelligence that a hawk flies, that it spreads its wings toward the south? Is it at your word that *an eagle soars* and raises its nest aloft? (Job 39:26, 27)

The eagle plainly means reason, which is an aspect of intelligence. That is what an eagle symbolized in the ancient church—Job being a book of the ancient church (§3540). Almost all the books of that era were symbolic compositions, but over time the symbolism passed into oblivion. Eventually no one knew even that birds in general symbolize thoughts, despite frequent mention of them in the Word, where they obviously mean something other than birds.

[7] The negative symbolism of an eagle as rationality that is not true but false is visible from the following passages. In Moses:

Jehovah will raise over you a nation from far away, from the end of the earth, *as the eagle flies in*—a nation whose tongue you cannot hear, a nation hard of face. (Deuteronomy 28:49, 50)

In Jeremiah:

Look: a cloud rises! And its chariots are like a windstorm; *swifter than eagles are its horses*. Alas for us, because we have been devastated! (Jeremiah 4:13)

By the same author:

Your boasting has deceived you, the pride of your heart—you who live in openings of rock, who occupy the height of a hill—because *like an eagle you raise your nest aloft*; from there I will throw you down. Look: *like an eagle he rises and flies* and spreads his wings over Bozrah; and the heart of the powerful of Edom on that day became like the heart of a woman in anguish. (Jeremiah 49:16, 17, 22)

By the same author:

Swifter were our pursuers *than eagles*. On the mountains they chased us; in the wilderness they lay in wait for us. (Lamentations 4:19)

In Micah:

Make yourself bald and shave yourself, over the children of your pleasures; broaden your baldness *like the eagle* because they have moved away from you. (Micah 1:16)

In Obadiah:

If you *exalt yourself like an eagle*, and if you put your nest among the stars, from there I will pull you down. (Obadiah verse 4)

In Habakkuk:

I am rousing the Chaldeans, a nation bitter and rash, invading the breadth of the land to inherit dwellings that are not theirs. *Its horses are nimbler than eagles*;

its riders will come from a distance; they will fly forward like an *eagle darting in to eat*. (Habakkuk 1:6, 8)

[8] In these passages eagles symbolize falsity introduced by logic that is based on sensory illusions and superficial appearances. In the last quotation from the prophets, the Chaldeans symbolize people with piety on the outside but falsity inside (see §1368). They, like Babylon, are the ones who devastate the church (§1327). The breadth of the land means truth (§§3433, 3434), and invasion of the breadth of the land symbolizes the stripping away of truth. Horses mean the intellectual prowess of these people, which has the same character they do (§§2761, 2762, 3217). From this it is apparent why the eagle is darting in to eat: to strip humankind of truth (the ruination of the church being the present topic). These things are merely compared to eagles, but to repeat, comparisons in the Word rely on symbolism. This discussion now clarifies the meaning of the comparison with eagles who will gather around the carcass.

[§4056] In the fourth and fifth volumes, chapters 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 were introduced with an explanation of the Lord's words in Matthew 24:3–28 predicting the close of the age, or the Last Judgment. Now comes an explanation of the words that follow there, starting before the present chapter with verses 29, 30, 31, which say:

Immediately after the affliction of those days, though, the sun will go dark, and the moon will not shed its light, and the stars will fall down from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Humankind will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn. And they will see the Son of Humankind coming in the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And he will send his angels out with a trumpet and a loud voice, and they will gather his chosen people from the four winds, from the end of the heavens right to the end of them.

§4057 I have already explained that the close of the age, or the Last Judgment, means the church's final days, which are said to occur when there is no longer any neighborly love or faith in it. I have also shown that these closures or final periods have happened several times. The close of the first church was depicted by the Flood; that of the second church, by the eradication of various nations in the land of Canaan, and by many other massacres and cases of genocide reported by the prophets. The Word does not describe but predicts the close of the third church, which was the destruction of Jerusalem and the worldwide scattering of the Jewish nation and its people (among whom that church existed). The fourth close is that of the modern Christian church, which is foretold by the Lord in the Gospels and John's Revelation and is currently at hand.

§4058 The previous verses of this chapter in Matthew spoke of the growing devastation of the church: first, people would start to forget what was good and true and would quarrel over it; second, they would despise it; third, they would refuse to acknowledge it at heart; fourth they would profane it. These stages were the theme in verses 3–22 of the chapter. Since religious truth and neighborly kindness would survive at the church's core, among the people referred to as chosen, verses 23–28 describe what the state of religious truth will then be like, and the verses just quoted describe the state of a charitable, loving goodness. They also tell about the start of a new church.

§4059 Everything said in these verses makes it obvious that they have an inner meaning, and that if we do not understand that meaning, we cannot possibly know what is involved. What does it imply to say that the sun and moon will go dark, the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, the Lord will appear in the clouds of the sky, and angels will blow a trumpet to gather the chosen? If we do not know the inner meaning of these words we have to believe that such things will happen and in fact that the world will perish, along with every visible object in space. But the Last Judgment does not mean the end of the world, or some such thing; it means the culmination of the church, or the stripping away of its charity and faith. This can be seen in §3353 and is quite plain from the next sentences in Matthew 24, verses 40, 41:

“Two will then be in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two grinding; one will be taken, the other left.”

[§4060] Accordingly, the symbolism of the words quoted above (the state of the church at that point in regard to goodness, or to charity for one’s neighbor and love for the Lord) can be seen from their inner meaning, which is this:

Immediately after the affliction of those days, though symbolizes the condition of the church in respect to the religious truth discussed in the verses just preceding. In various places the Word refers to the ruination of truth as affliction; and days mean states, or conditions (see §§23, 487, 488, 493, 893, 2788, 3462, 3785). Clearly, then, these words mean that after faith ceases, charity will cease. Faith leads to charity, because it teaches us what charity is, and charity takes its character from religious truth, but religious truth takes its essence and life from charity (as demonstrated many times in earlier volumes [§3986]).

[2] *The sun will go dark, and the moon will not shed its light* symbolizes love for the Lord (the sun) and charity for one’s neighbor (the moon), and going dark and not shedding its light means that they will not be visible; they will disappear. To see that the sun means heavenly love and the moon means spiritual love—that is, that the sun means love for the Lord, and the moon means charity for one’s neighbor growing out of faith—review §§1053, 1529, 1530, 2120, 2441, 2495. The reason for this symbolism of sun and moon is that in the other world the Lord appears as a sun to the inhabitants of heaven who love him (“the heavenly”) and as a moon to the inhabitants who treat their neighbor with charity (“the spiritual”). See §§1053, 1521, 1529, 1530, 1531, 3636, 3643.

[3] The sun and moon in the heavens—that is, the Lord—never go dark or lose their light but are always shining. Neither does love for him fade among the heavenly nor charity for one’s neighbor among the spiritual in the heavens. On earth they do not fade among people who have heavenly and spiritual angels with them, or in other words, among people who possess love and charity. No, they are extinguished among people devoid of love and charity who love themselves and their worldly advantages instead,

and who therefore seethe with hatred and vengefulness. These people bring the darkness on themselves. The case resembles that of the earthly sun, which shines constantly, though it is not visible when clouds block it; see §2441.

[4] *And the stars will fall down from the sky* means that knowledge of goodness and truth will die. When the Word mentions stars, they just symbolize such knowledge (§§1808, 2849).

And the powers of the heavens will be shaken symbolizes the foundations of the church. They are said to shake and tremble when that knowledge dies. The church on earth is the foundation of heaven, because the stream of goodness and truth flowing through the heavens from the Lord reaches its final destination in the good urges and true ideas of people in the church. So when the attitude of people in the church is so contrary that they refuse to let goodness and truth influence them anymore, the powers of the heavens are said to be shaken. The Lord as a result always provides that some trace of the church remain and that a new church be established when the old one dies.

[5] *And then the sign of the Son of Humankind will appear in the sky* means that divine truth will then make an appearance. The sign means its emergence. The Son of Humankind means the Lord in regard to divine truth (see §§2803, 2813, 3704). This manifestation, or sign, is what the disciples asked about in verse 3 of this chapter [Matthew 24] when they said to the Lord,

“Tell us when these things will happen—especially what the sign of your coming and of the close of the age will be.”

They knew from the Word that the Lord would come when the era ended, and they knew from the Lord that he would come again. This they took to mean that he would come into the world once more, since they did not yet realize that he comes whenever a church has been spiritually devastated. He does not come in person, as he did when he clothed himself in humanity by being born and made his humanity divine. Rather, he comes by emerging either in visible ways, as when he appeared to Abraham

in Mamre, to Moses in the bramble, to the Israelite people on Mount Sinai, and to Joshua when he entered the land of Canaan, or in less visible ways, as in the kind of inspiration that produced the Word. He also comes by means of the Word, in which he is present, since everything in the Word is from him and about him, as many previous discussions have already shown. This is the manifestation that the sign of the Son of Humankind symbolizes and the verse treats of.

[6] *And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn* means that everyone who possesses a loving goodness and religious truth will grieve. For this symbolism of mourning, see Zechariah 12:10, 11, 12, 13, 14. Tribes symbolize every facet of goodness and truth, or of love and faith (§§3858, 3926), so they symbolize people who possess those things. They are called tribes of the earth because they symbolize people inside the church—the earth, or land, meaning the church (see §§662, 1066, 1068, 1262, 1733, 1850, 2117, 2928, 3355).

[7] *And they will see the Son of Humankind coming in the clouds of the heavens with power and great glory* means that the inner meaning of the Word, which contains the Lord, will then be revealed. The Son of Humankind means divine truth in the Word (§§2803, 2813, 3704). The cloud stands for the literal meaning. Power is an attribute of the goodness there, and glory, of the truth. For this symbolism of seeing the Son of Humankind coming in the clouds of the heavens, consult the preface to Genesis 18. The Lord's coming in this way is what is meant here, not a literal future appearance by him in the clouds. The subject addressed next is the establishment of a new church, which happens when the old one has been devastated and rejected.

[8] *He will send angels out with a trumpet and a loud voice* symbolizes being chosen—not by visible angels, let alone with trumpets and loud voices, but by sacred goodness and truth streaming in from the Lord through the angels. That is why angels in the Word symbolize something belonging to the Lord (§§1925, 2821, 3039). In this instance they symbolize what comes from the Lord and tells about him. The trumpet and loud voice symbolize spreading the good news, as they do elsewhere in the Word.

[9] *And they will gather his chosen people from the four winds, from the end of the heavens right to the end of them* symbolizes the establishment of a new church. The chosen people are those with the goodness that comes of love and faith (§§3755, 3900:4). The four winds from which they will be gathered mean all phases of goodness and truth (§3708). The end of the heavens to the end of them means the inner depths and the outer surface of the church. This, now, is what the Lord's words here symbolize.

[§4229] In the fourth volume I started to explain the Lord's predictions concerning the Last Judgment in Matthew 24. The explanation came at the head of the later chapters in the volume and reached verse 31 of that Gospel [chapter] (see §§3353–3356, 3486–3489, 3650–3655, [3751–3757], 3897–3901, 4056–4060). The explanations there reveal the inner meaning of the whole. To sum up, the Lord predicted the growing devastation of the church and the eventual establishment of a new church, in the following order:

1. People would start to forget what was good and true and would quarrel over it.
2. They would despise it.
3. They would refuse to acknowledge it at heart.
4. They would profane it.
5. Since religious truth and neighborly kindness would survive among certain people referred to as chosen, the text depicts the state of faith at that point
6. And afterward the state of neighborly love.
7. Finally it treats of the start of a new church. The dawn of a new church is meant by the last sentence explained there:

“And he will send his angels out with a trumpet and a loud voice, and they will gather his chosen people from the four winds, from the end of the heavens right to the end of them” (verse 31).

To see that these words mean the beginning of a new church, review the end of §4060.

[§4230] When the end of an old religion and the beginning of a new one is at hand, it is time for a final judgment. Such a time is meant in the Word by the Last Judgment (see §§2117–2133, 3353, 4057) and the Son of Humankind’s arrival. This arrival is the current topic and is what the disciples had asked the Lord about when they said,

“Tell us when these things will happen—especially what the sign of your coming and of the close of the age will be” (Matthew 24:3).

What now remains to be explained, therefore, are the Lord’s predictions about the actual time of his Coming and of the close of the age (which is the Last Judgment).

[2] Here at the head of the present chapter the explanation will cover only the contents of verses 32, 33, 34, 35:

From the fig tree, though, learn the parable: When its branch now becomes soft and the leaves come out, you know that the summer is near. So also when you see all these things, know for yourselves that [the time] is near at the doors. Truly, I say to you: this generation will not pass away till all these things happen. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The inner meaning of these words follows.

[§4231] *From the fig tree, though, learn the parable: when its branch becomes soft and the leaves come out, you know that the summer is near* symbolizes the first stage of a new religion. The fig tree means earthly goodness, the branch means its emotional effect, and the leaves mean true ideas. The parable they were to learn from

means the existence of this symbolism. Anyone who does not know the Word's inner meaning can never see what is involved in a comparison of the Lord's Coming with a fig tree and its branch and leaves. However, all comparisons in the Word are also symbolic (§3579:5), which means that we can learn their significance. Whenever the Word mentions a fig tree, on an inner level it symbolizes earthly good; see §217. A branch symbolizes its emotional effect because emotion stems from goodness as a branch forks from its trunk. For the meaning of leaves as truth, see §885. These remarks now reveal the thrust of the parable: When the Lord creates a new religion, what appears first of all is earthly good, or a superficial form of good, with the emotion and true ideas that accompany it. By earthly goodness I do not mean the goodness we are born with or inherit from our parents but goodness that has a spiritual origin. No one is born into this kind of goodness; no, the Lord introduces it into us through our knowledge of goodness and truth. Until we adopt this spiritual goodness, then, we do not belong to the church, no matter how much our inborn goodness makes it look as though we do.

[2] *So also when you see all these things, know for yourselves that [the time] is near at the doors* means that when these effects appear—the effects symbolized on an inner level by the Lord's words just before this in verses 29, 30, 31 and his words here concerning the fig tree—the age will close (the Last Judgment will occur) and he will come. Consequently it means that the old religion will then be rejected and a new one established. The text says “at the doors” because earthly goodness and its truth are the first traits instilled into a person who is being reborn and becoming an individual church.

Truly, I say to you: this generation will not pass away till all these things happen means that the Jewish nation will not be wiped out like other nations. For the reason, see §3479.

[3] *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away* means that the inner core and outer surface of the previous religion will disappear but the Lord's Word will remain. Heaven means the inner core of a church, and the earth, its outer surface; see §§82, 1411, 1733, 1850, 2117, 2118, 3355. “My words” obviously mean

not only what the Lord says here about his Coming and the close of the age but everything in the Word. This message comes right after the statement about the Jewish nation because the Jewish nation was preserved for the sake of the Word, as can be seen in the place cited, §3479. This discussion now shows that the present passage foretells the beginnings of a new religion.

§4332 Before the last chapter I explained the Lord's predictions in Matthew 24:32, 33, 34, 35 concerning his Coming, which means the last days of the previous church and the first stage of a new one, as shown there [§§4229–4231] and in various earlier sections [§§728, 2405:8, 2441, 3353, 4060]. The final days (or end) of the previous church and the first stage (or beginning) of a new one have already been discussed; see the preliminaries to Genesis 31, §§4056–4060, and Genesis 32, §§4229–4231. Now I need to explain the words that follow in verses 36–41 of the same chapter in that Gospel:

Of that day and hour, though, no one knows (not even the angels of the heavens) except my Father alone. As the days of Noah were, though, so will be the coming of the Son of Humankind. For as they were in the days before the Flood—eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day on which Noah entered into the ark, and did not know till the Flood came and carried them all away—so also will be the coming of the Son of Humankind. Two will then be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two grinding in the mill; one will be taken and one left.

§4333 What these words symbolize on an inner level will become clear from the explanation that follows, showing that they depict future conditions, when the old church is rejected and a new one is established. The rejection of the old church and the establishment of a new one is meant by the close of the age and the Son of Humankind's Coming, and by the Last Judgment generally, and this has been demonstrated many times before. So has the idea that this kind of last judgment has happened several times

on our globe. The *first* was when the Lord's heavenly church—the earliest church—perished among the people who lived just before the Flood. This church died in a deluge of evil and falsity, which is what a flood means in an inner sense.

[2] The *second* was when the spiritual church that came after the Flood simply ended. This church was called the ancient church and pervaded much of the Near East.

[3] The *third* was when the representation of a church among Jacob's descendants was destroyed. This occurred when the Ten Tribes were taken into permanent captivity and scattered among the nations, and finally when Jerusalem was destroyed and the people of Judah were also dispersed. Since an era was brought to a close after the Lord came on earth, much of what he said in the Gospels about the close of that age can also be applied to the Jewish nation. Many people today so apply it. However, the main, specific message there has to do with the culmination now at hand, which is the end of the Christian church (described also by John in the Book of Revelation). This will be the *fourth* of the last judgments taking place on our earth. The implications of the words contained in verses 36–42, quoted above, will be evident from the inner meaning of those words, which is as follows:

[§4334] *Of that day and hour, though, no one knows* means that no one on earth or in heaven will be able to see what the state of goodness and truth in the church will then be. The day and hour do not mean a day and hour, or time, but a state of goodness and truth. To see that periods of time in the Word symbolize states, review §§2625, 2788, 2837, 3254, 3356. A day symbolizes a state (§§23, 487, 488, 493, 893, 2788, 3462, 3785), so an hour does too, but it symbolizes a particular one. A state of goodness and truth is meant because the topic of discussion is the church, and goodness and truth make up the church.

[2] *Not even the angels of the heavens, except my Father alone* means that heaven does not know the specific state of goodness and truth in the church; only the Lord does. He alone also knows when that state in the church will come. The Father means the Lord himself (see §§15, 1729, 2004, 2005, 3690:5). Divine goodness in the

Lord is called the Father, and divine truth growing out of divine goodness is called the Son (§§2803, 3703, 3704, 3736). People who believe that the Father is one person and the Son another and distinguish them do not understand the Scriptures.

[3] *But as they were in the days before the Flood* symbolizes a state in which people in the church are being spiritually devastated, which resembles the state of devastation in the first or earliest church. The close of the age or last judgment for the earliest church is portrayed in the Word as a flood—a flood symbolizing a deluge of evil and falsity and therefore the close of that era; see §§310, 660, 662, 705, 739, 790, 805, 1120. For the idea that days mean states, see above.

[4] *Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage* symbolizes their state when they adopt evil and falsity and then internalize them. Eating means adopting goodness, and drinking means adopting truth; see §§3168, 3513, 3596, so in a negative sense they mean adopting evil and falsity. Marrying means uniting with or internalizing evil, and giving in marriage means the same in regard to falsity. This can be seen from the discussion and explanation of marriage and marriage love in §§686, 2173, 2618, 2728, 2729, 2737, 2738, 2739, 2803, 3132, 3155, showing that in an inner sense it is a union of goodness and truth. In the negative sense used here it is a union of evil and falsity. Everything the Lord said was divine, so its inner meaning is not the same as its literal meaning. When he speaks of eating and drinking in the Holy Supper, for instance, in its spiritual sense it does not mean eating and drinking but being adopted by the good that comes of his divine love (§§2165, 2177, 2187, 2343, 2359, 3464, 3478, 3735, 4211, 4217). For another instance, when he associates marriage with the church and his kingdom, it means a union between love's goodness and faith's truth. Because of this union, the Lord's kingdom is called a heavenly marriage in the Word.

[5] *Up to the day on which Noah entered into the ark* symbolizes the end of the previous church and the beginning of a new one. Noah symbolizes the ancient church in general, which replaced the earliest church after the Flood (§773 and other places). The ark symbolizes the church itself (§639). A day, which is mentioned several times in these verses, symbolizes a state, as shown just above.

[6] *And did not know till the Flood came and carried them all away* means that people in the church will not then know that they have been deluged with evil and falsity. Because of the evil and falsity they succumb to, they will not be able to identify the good belonging to love for the Lord and to charity for one's neighbor. They will not know what the truth belonging to faith is, or that it develops out of love and charity, or that it exists only in people who live lives of love and charity. They will also be unaware that what saves or damns us is what we have inside, not what we are like outside separated from what we have inside.

[7] *So will be the coming of the Son of Humankind* means that divine truth will not be welcome. The Son of Humankind's Coming is divine truth that will then be revealed, as noted before at verses 27 and 30 [§§3900:9, 4060:5], in §§2803, 2813, 3704, and in §§3004, 3005, 3006, 3008, 3009.

[8] *Two will then be in the field; one will be taken and one left* symbolizes people in the church devoted to goodness and people in the church devoted to evil. Those devoted to goodness will be saved, and those devoted to evil will be damned . . .

[9] *Two grinding in the mill; one will be taken and one left* means that people in the church who focus on truth (or desire truth) for good reasons will be saved, while people in the church who focus on truth (or desire truth) for bad reasons will be damned. This symbolism of grinding and a mill in the Word will be visible from the discussion that follows directly.

This evidence now shows that the words above depict future conditions for goodness and truth in the church when the church is rejected and a new church is adopted.

[§4335] In the Word, *millers* mean people in the church who focus on truth because they want what is good. In a negative sense they mean people in the church who focus on truth because they want what is bad. These meanings can be seen from the following passages:

In Isaiah:

Go down and sit in the dirt, virgin daughter of Babylon. Sit on the earth. There is no throne, daughter of the Chaldeans. *Take a mill and grind meal; uncover your hair; bare your foot; uncover your thigh; cross rivers.* (Isaiah 47:1, 2)

The daughter of Babylon stands for people who on the outside seem devout and good but inside are profane and evil (§§1182, 1326). The daughter of the Chaldeans stands for people who on the outside seem devout and filled with truth but inside are profane and filled with falsity (§§1368, 1816). Taking a mill and grinding meal stands for hatching doctrine out of truth by twisting it. Meal consists of wheat or barley, so it symbolizes truth resulting from goodness, but in an opposite sense it symbolizes truth that people twist in order to lead others astray. In Jeremiah:

I will destroy from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, *the voice of millstones* and the light of a lamp. And this whole land will become a wasteland and a ruin. (Jeremiah 25:10, 11)

[2] And in John:

No artisan of any art will be found in Babylon any longer; *no voice of a millstone will be heard in it any longer*, and the light of a lamp will not shine in it any longer, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will not be heard in it any longer. (Revelation 18:21, 22, 23)

“The voice of a millstone will not be heard in Babylon any longer” means that truth will not be heard; “the light of a lamp will not shine” means that no understanding of truth will shine either. In Lamentations:

Women in Zion they have raped; young women in the cities of Judah. Chieftains have been hung by their hand; the presence of the old has not been honored.

Young people have been taken away to grind, and youths fall down on the wood.
(Lamentations 5:11, 12, 13, 14)

The grinding for which the young people were taken stands for the fabrication of falsity, with a touch of truth added to make it convincing.

[3] In Moses:

Every firstborn in the land of Egypt will die, from Pharaoh's firstborn sitting on his throne *to the slave woman's firstborn who is behind the millstones.* (Exodus 11:5)

The firstborn of Egypt stand for religious truth detached from neighborly kindness. This truth turns into falsity (§3325).

The slave woman's firstborn who is behind the millstones stands for a desire for this kind of truth, which is the source of the falsity. That is what this piece of the story represented.

[4] By the same author:

No one shall take *millstones* and *grindstone* as collateral, because they are the soul of the one who pawns them. (Deuteronomy 24:6)

This law was laid down because millstones symbolized doctrines, and a grindstone symbolized doctrinal truth. These two things are being called the soul of the one who pawns them. Plainly the law would not have been given and the stones would not have been described as the borrower's soul if millstones and a grindstone were not spiritually symbolic.

[5] Grinding takes its symbolism from representations occurring in the world of spirits, as I have been shown. I saw some people there who seemed to be grinding and was told that they symbolize people who collect truth in large quantities without any

useful purpose, just for their own pleasure. When people acquire truth in this way, it fails to touch them with its goodness. It looks true on the outside, but since it lacks any inner content, it is a mirage. If its inner content is evil, it is used to justify evil, and the connection with evil turns it into falsity.

[\$4422] This chapter will be preceded by an explanation of the Lord's words in Matthew 24, from verse 42 to the end—the chapter's final words on the close of the age, or the Lord's Coming. The literal words are these:

Be watchful, then, because you do not know at what hour your Lord is coming. Know this, though: that if the householder knew what watch the thief comes in, he would certainly be watchful and not let his house be broken into. Therefore you be ready too, because at an hour that you don't imagine the Son of Humankind will come. Who, then, is the faithful servant, and wise, whom his lord set over his domestics, to give them the food in season? Fortunate is that servant whom his lord, coming, finds doing so. Truly, I say to you that [his lord] will set him over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, "My lord puts off coming," and starts to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the lord of this servant will come on a day that he does not expect and in an hour that he does not realize. And [his lord] will cut him in two and put his portion with the hypocrites. In that place there is lamentation and the gnashing of teeth.

Context clarifies what these words involve. After all, the whole Gospel chapter has been about the church's final days—this being what the close of the age and the Lord's Coming mean in an inner sense. The explanations of the chapter's entire contents show this to be true. See those explanations at the head of the last few chapters: chapter 26, §§3353–3356; chapter 27, §§3486–3489; chapter 28, §§3650–3655; chapter 29, §§3751–3757; chapter 30, §§3897–3901; chapter 31, §§4056–4060; chapter 32, §§4229–4231; chapter 33, §§4332–4335.

[2] Those discussions also laid out the sequential thread of the contents, which predicted what would happen when the Christian church that was established after the Lord's Coming started to destroy itself, falling away from goodness:

1. People would start to forget what was good and true and would quarrel over it.
2. They would despise it.
3. Next they would refuse to acknowledge it at heart.
4. Then they would profane it.
5. Since religious truth and neighborly kindness would survive among certain people referred to as chosen, the text depicts the state of faith at that point.
6. And afterward the state of neighborly love.
7. Finally it treats of the start of a new church and
8. The condition of goodness and truth in the so-called church when that church is rejected and a new church is adopted.

This series suggests what is involved in the passage copied out above—the closing part of that chapter. It encourages people in the church to do the good that faith requires, and warns that if they do not, they will be destroyed.

[\$4423] Hardly anyone knows what happens when an old church is rejected and a new one is adopted. Some people know nothing about the inner dimension of a human being or the state of that dimension, so they do not know about a person's state after death. Such people necessarily figure that individuals in the old church who are stripped of goodness and truth—that is, who no longer pay heartfelt tribute to goodness and truth—will perish, either in a flood like the antediluvians or by exile from their land like the Jews or some other way. In reality, though, when a church has been devastated, or in

other words, when it no longer does the good required by faith, it perishes mainly in terms of its inner state. So it perishes mainly in regard to its state in the other world. Heaven then detaches from the people of that church (as does the Lord) and shifts to another group of people, whom it adopts in their place. This is because heaven has no means of contact with humankind if the church does not exist somewhere on earth. The church is like the heart and lungs of the universal human on earth (§§468, 637, 931, 2054, 2853).

[2] People who are then in the old church and have consequently been banished from heaven are in a flood in regard to their inner reaches, and the water even goes over their head. They themselves are unaware of the deluge while living in their body, but they enter it after death. In the other world the flood is plain to see. In fact it looks like a thick fog enveloping them and separating them from heaven. The situation of people wrapped in that misty fog is that they absolutely cannot see to identify religious truth, let alone religious goodness. Heaven's light, which contains understanding and wisdom, cannot penetrate their cloud. Such is the state of a devastated church.

[§4424] The inner meaning of the Lord's words quoted above is self-evident. The Lord is not speaking so much in a representative and symbolic way as in metaphors. All that needs to be explained is the symbolism of the words in the last verse: *He will cut him in two and put his portion with the hypocrites. In that place there is lamenting and the gnashing of teeth.*

He will cut him in two means being separated and isolated from goodness and truth. People who know what is good and true, as those in the church do, and yet who live evil lives, are said to be cut in two when that knowledge is taken from them. In the other world they are deprived of the knowledge of goodness and truth and are held in the grip of evil and therefore of falsity. The purpose is to prevent them from making contact with heaven through their knowledge of goodness and truth and with hell through evil and the resulting falsity. If they did that, they would hang suspended between the two. Another purpose is to prevent them from profaning what is good and

true, which happens when goodness and truth mingle with falsity and evil. The same idea is symbolized by the Lord's words to the man who hid his talent in the earth:

Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. Because those who have something will be granted everything, so as to overflow with it. But from those who don't have anything, even what they have will be taken. (Matthew 25:28, 29)

This is also true of statements the Lord makes elsewhere in Matthew (13:12), and in Mark (4:25) and Luke (8:18).

[2] *And put his portion with the hypocrites* symbolizes such people's fate (portion) among those who seem on the outside to adopt a true theology and live a good life but inwardly believe nothing that is true and intend no good (hypocrites). Such people are accordingly "cut in two." When their outer veneer is taken from them, which happens to everyone in the other life, they appear as they are on the inside, devoid of faith and neighborly love. These are qualities they had paraded about in order to dupe others into bestowing honors, wealth, and reputation on them. Almost everyone in the devastated church is like this. They have the outward appearance but nothing inside. So their inner depths are immersed in a flood, as discussed just above in §4423.

[3] *In that place there will be lamentation and the gnashing of teeth* symbolizes their state in the other life. Lamentation is the state of their evil, and the gnashing of teeth is the state of their falsity. Teeth in the Word symbolize what lies on the lowest earthly level—in a positive sense, truth on that level, and in a negative sense, falsity. That is also what teeth correspond to. The gnashing of teeth, then, is falsity's clash with truth. Some people concentrate on the earthly realm alone, and concentrate on it as a result of sensory illusions, believing only what they can see on the basis of sensory information. These people are said to gnash their teeth. In the next life they even seem to themselves to be gnashing their teeth when they are drawing conclusions about religious truth on the basis of their illusions. In a religion stripped of goodness and

truth, people like this are numerous. The gnashing of teeth has the same symbolism elsewhere, as in Matthew:

The children of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness; in that place there will be lamentation and the *gnashing of teeth*. (Matthew 8:12)

The children of the kingdom are people in a devastated religion.

The darkness means falsity (§4418) because they are in the dark when they are in the thick fog described above. The gnashing of teeth is the clash between falsity and truth there. Likewise in other passages, such as Matthew 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 13:28.

§4635 The Lord's predictions in Matthew 24 about the church's final days have already been explained in sections prefacing the Genesis chapters [§§3353–3356, 3486–3489, 3650–3655, 3751–3757, 3897–3901, 4056–4060]. The subject continues in chapter 25 of the same Gospel, so let me also explain the inner meaning of that material in order. Here it is in its literal form:

Then the kingdom of the heavens will become like ten young women who, taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were prudent, but five were stupid. Those who were stupid, taking their lamps, did not take oil with them. But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps. And the groom being late, they all slumbered and slept. And in the middle of the night a shout was raised: "Look! The groom is coming! Go out to meet him!" Then all those young women woke up and readied their lamps. But the stupid said to the prudent, "Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out." And the prudent answered, saying, "[No,] or there might not be enough for us and you. But rather go to the vendors and buy for yourselves." As they went to buy, though, the groom came, and the well-prepared ones went in with him to the wedding, and the door was closed. And later the other young women also come,

saying, “Lord! Lord! Open up to us!” But he, answering, said, “Truly, I say to you: I don’t know you.” Be watchful, therefore, because you do not know the day or the hour in which the Son of Humankind is to come. (Matthew 25:1–13)

[\$4636] The Lord used this parable to depict his Coming, as can be seen from the details and from the ending, where he says, “Be watchful, therefore, because you do not know the day or the hour in which the Son of Humankind is to come.” He says something similar in the previous chapter, Matthew 24, where he talks explicitly about his Coming:

“Be watchful, then, because you do not know at what hour your Lord is to come” (verse 42).

I have already shown that his Coming is the close of the age, or the final days of the church [§§931, 1850, 2118, 3353, 4056–4060, 4230].

[\$4637] Absolutely everything the Lord said in parable represented and symbolized the spiritual and heavenly qualities of his kingdom and (in the highest sense) divine qualities in himself. This is quite plain. People who do not know it cannot grasp that the Lord’s parables are anything more than common metaphors or that they conceal anything further in their inmost recesses. That is how they look at this parable about the ten young women, for instance, unless they know what is symbolized on an inner level by the young women, by ten, five, lamps, vessels, oil, sellers, a wedding, and so on. It is the same for all the other parables. What the Lord said in these stories appears in its outward form like everyday metaphors, as I said, but in its inward form it is such that it fills the whole of heaven. Present in every detail is an inner meaning whose spiritual and heavenly content spreads throughout the heavens in every direction like fire and light. It exists high above the literal meaning and flows from each sentence, each word, and even every jot. What this parable involves in its inner meaning becomes clear from the following comments.

[§4638] *Then the kingdom of the heavens will become like ten young women* symbolizes the last days of the old church and the first stage of a new one, the church being the Lord's kingdom on earth. The ten young women mean everyone in the church—both those committed to what is good and true and those committed to what is evil and false. In an inner sense, ten means a remnant, and also completeness, and therefore everyone. Young women mean people in the church. This holds true elsewhere in the Word, too.

[2] *Who, taking their lamps* symbolizes spiritual entities holding what is heavenly, or in other words, true ideas holding what is good, or faith holding charity for one's neighbor, and charity holding love for the Lord. (Oil means a loving goodness, as will be discussed below.) Lamps *without* oil, though, mean those same things not holding any goodness.

[3] *Went out to meet the bridegroom* symbolizes their welcome.

And five of them were prudent, but five were stupid symbolizes the portion of them whose true ideas are full of good and the portion whose true ideas hold no good. The first group is the prudent women, and the second is the stupid ones. In an inner sense, five means some, so in this case it means a portion of them.

Those who were stupid, taking their lamps, did not take oil with them means that they would not have charitable goodness in their truth. Oil in an inner sense means the good embraced by charity and love.

But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps means that their truth would hold a charitable, loving goodness. Vessels mean religious doctrines.

[4] *And the groom being late, they all slumbered and slept* symbolizes a delay and consequent doubt. In an inner sense, slumbering means becoming lazy in religious matters as a result of the delay. Sleeping means cherishing doubt—for the prudent, doubt that seeks to affirm, and for the stupid, doubt that seeks to deny.

And in the middle of the night a shout was raised symbolizes a period that was the last stage of the old church and the first stage of a new one. This period is what the Word refers to as night, when treating of the church's state. The shout means a change.

“Look! The groom is coming! Go out to meet him!” has the same symbolism as a judgment, namely, acceptance and rejection.

[5] *Then all those young women woke up, they readied their lamps* symbolizes preparation by all of them. People with truth that is empty of goodness trust that they will be accepted just as much as people with truth that is full of goodness. They think faith by itself brings salvation, not realizing that there is no faith where charity is lacking.

But the stupid said to the prudent, “Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out,” means that they want other people to lend goodness to their empty truth, their hollow faith. In the other world, everyone shares everything spiritual and heavenly with each other, but only through the medium of goodness.

[6] *And the prudent answered, saying, “[No,] or there might not be enough for us and you,”* means that it cannot be lent, because the little good they have would be taken from them. In the other life, when good is shared with people whose true ideas are devoid of good, they more or less rob the donor of good and claim it as their own. They do not share it with others but defile it. As a result, no one ever lends good to them. A description of my experience with these people will appear of the next chapter, Genesis 37 [§§4804–4805].

[7] *“But rather go to the vendors and buy for yourselves”* symbolizes self-righteous goodness. Vendors mean people who boast of their goodness. People who possess truth that is devoid of goodness are more likely than others in the next life to take credit for everything they have done that looked good on the outside, even if it was evil on the inside. As the Lord says in Matthew,

Many will say to me on that day, “Lord! Lord! Haven’t we prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and exercised many powers in your name?” But then I’ll proclaim to them, “I do not know you. Leave me, you evildoers!” (Matthew 7:22, 23)

And in Luke:

From the time the householder rises and shuts the door, then you’ll start to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, “Lord! Lord! Open up to us!” But answering he’ll say to you, “I don’t know you, where you’re from.” Then you’ll start to say, “We ate before you, and drank, and in our streets you taught.” But he’ll say, “I tell you I don’t know you, where you’re from. Leave me, all you evildoers!” (Luke 13:25, 26, 27)

They are the kind of people meant by the stupid young women. That is why something similar is said of these: “They also came, saying, ‘Lord! Lord! Open up to us!’ But he, answering, said, ‘Truly, I say to you: I don’t know you.’”

[8] *As they went to buy, though, the groom came* symbolizes a completely backward approach.

And the well prepared ones went in with him to the wedding means that people with goodness and therefore with truth are taken into heaven. Heaven is likened to a wedding because of the heavenly marriage, the marriage of goodness and truth. The Lord is likened to a bridegroom because these people are then united with him. That is why the church is called a bride.

And the door was closed means that others cannot go in.

[9] *And later the other young women also come, saying, “Lord! Lord! Open up to us!”* means that they want in on the basis of faith by itself without charity, and good deeds filled not with the Lord’s life but with self-centered life.

But he, answering, said, “Truly, I say to you: I don’t know you” symbolizes rejection. In an inner sense, not knowing them means not having any charity for one’s neighbor or any bond with the Lord through charity. People who do not have this bond are being described as unknown.

[10] *Be watchful, therefore, because you do not know the day or the hour in which the Son of Humankind is to come* symbolizes being intent on living a life in keeping with faith’s precepts. That is what being watchful means. We do not know when or in what state we will be taken [to the other world], and this is symbolized by “you do not know the day or the hour in which the Son of Humankind is to come.” There is also another place in Matthew where the Lord ascribes prudence to people who have goodness—people who live by the commandments—but stupidity to those who know what is true and do not live by it:

Everyone who hears my words and does them, I will compare that person to a *prudent* man; and everyone hearing my words but not doing them will be compared to a *stupid* man. (Matthew 7:24, 26)