

Psalms about the Vastation of the Church

Week Three



**The sayings of Jehovah are clean sayings,
Silver refined in a crucible of earth, refined sevenfold.**

Psalm 12:7

Prophets and Psalms 0.

The [Topics] that follow *[in this little work treat of]*:

- 1. The Lord's advent.**
- 2. The successive vastation of the church.**
- 3. The church totally devastated, and its rejection.**
- 4. The rejection of the Lord by the church.**
- 5. The Lord's temptations in general.**
- 6. Temptation even to despair.**
- 7. The combats of the Lord with the hells.**
- 8. Victory over them, or their subjugation.**
9. The passion of the cross.
- 10. The glorification of the Human of the Lord, or its union with the Divine.**
- 11. A new church in place of the former.**
- 12. A new church together with a new heaven.**
- 13. The state of humiliation before the Father.**
- 15. A last judgment by the Lord.**
- 16. Celebration and worship of the Lord.**
- 17. Redemption and salvation by the Lord.**

This week we will focus on numbers 2, 3, 4 and 15.

Definition of "vastation": AC 407. It generally happens with the passage of time that the Church reaches a state when it departs from true faith until at last it comes to be entirely destitute of faith, when it is said to be "vastated" [*or "laid waste"*].... At the time of the Lord's advent the Jewish Church was in such a state of vastation that they knew nothing about the Lord.... Such was also the case with the primitive Christian Church, or that which existed after the Lord's advent, and which at this day is so completely vastated that there is no faith remaining in it. Yet there always remains some nucleus of a church, which those who are vastated as to faith do not acknowledge....

Day One: Contrasting hypocrisy with the Lord's "clean sayings"

Psalm 12

1 To the victor, upon the sheminith¹; a psalm of David.

Save, O Jehovah, for the merciful one has come to an end;

For the faithful fail from the sons of man.

2 They speak vanity, a man with his companion;
With a flattering lip, with *one* heart and a *second* heart
they speak.

3 Jehovah will cut off all flattering lips,
The tongue that speaks great things;

4 Those who say, As to our tongue we will prevail;
Our lips *are* with us; who is lord to us?

5 From the devastation of the afflicted,
From the groaning of the needy,
Now will I arise, says Jehovah;
I will set him in safety from him who puffs² at him.

6 The sayings of Jehovah are clean sayings,
Silver refined in a crucible of earth, refined sevenfold.

7 Thou, O Jehovah, wilt keep them;
Thou wilt preserve him from this generation to
eternity.

8 The wicked walk all around,
As worthlessness is exalted for the sons of man.

verses	topic	Summary of the Spiritual Sense
title, 1-4	3	There are no longer any good <i>people</i> , but only hypocrites.
5-8	11	The Lord will to eternity deliver the good as against the evil.

¹ a musical instrument (see AC 8337:5) with eight strings

² "puffs," i.e., "scoffs"

“Flattering lips”; “our lips are with us.”

AC 1286:4. Here “lips” are falsities.

The Lord exposes the hypocrisy of church leaders.

AC 3812:10. As hypocrisy is evil appearing outwardly as good, but is inwardly defiled with things false and profane, therefore the Lord says in Matthew:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for you make yourselves like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear just to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:27-28).

Hypocrisy vastating the church

AE 1029. “Babylon” or “Babel” means the church consisting of those who by means of the holy things of the church strive to gain dominion over the whole world, and this by dominion over the souls of men, claiming to themselves authority to save whomever they will; and these finally seek dominion over heaven and hell and make it their own. And to this end they draw and transfer to themselves all the Lord’s authority, as if it had been given to them by Him.

The church consisting of such [people] is very different in the beginning from what it becomes in process of time. In the beginning they are as it were in zeal for the Lord, for the Word, for love and faith, and especially for the salvation of men. But in that zeal the fire of domineering lies hidden, and in process of time, as dominion increases, it breaks out. And so far as it comes into act, the holy things of the church become the means, and dominion itself the end. And when dominion becomes the end, the holy things of the church are applied to that end, and thus to themselves. And then they not only ascribe the salvation of souls to their own authority, but they also appropriate to themselves all the Lord’s Divine

power. And when they do this, they pervert every good and every truth of the church, and thus profane the holy things of the church.

The antidote: silver refined in a crucible of earth, refined sevenfold

AC 720. The Lord's coming into the world, and in glory, and every coming of the Lord, is described... by the "seventh" ... day.... And it appears in Psalm 12:6 that silver was most pure when purified seven times.... From all of these passages it is plain that... "seven" does not signify seven, but things that are holy.

AE 257:5. "Silver" signifies truth from the Divine; "purified seven times" means wholly and fully pure.

Questions and Comments

1. The psalm speaks of the evil gaining power through flattering lips and prevailing by the tongue, and of the good being "puffed" or scoffed at. Is this something you have seen?
2. The beginning of the psalm is about the church being destroyed by hypocrites. In Matthew 23, Jesus criticizes the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees at length. Have you heard of or seen modern examples of this?
3. Jesus raised up a new church by His "clean sayings," like silver refined sevenfold. What are some of your favorite "clean sayings" in the Word, on which you base your life?

Day Two: "There is no God."

Psalm 14

- 1 To the victor; of David.
The fool has said in his heart, *there is no God.*
They have corrupted,
They have made abominable *their action;*
There is none who does good.
- 2 Jehovah looks down from the heavens upon the sons of man
To see if there be one who has intelligence,
Who inquires after God.
- 3 They have all turned aside; together they have become filthy;
There is none who does good,
Not even one.
- 4 Do not all the workers of iniquity know,
Eating up my people, *as if they eat up bread?*
Jehovah they do not call.
- 5 There they dreaded *with dread,*
For God *is* in the generation of the just one.
- 6 The counsel of the afflicted you have shamed,
Because Jehovah *is* his protection.
- 7 Who shall give the salvation of Israel out of Zion?
When Jehovah turns back the captivity of His people,
Jacob shall rejoice,
Israel shall be glad.

verses	topic	Summary of the Spiritual Sense
title, 1-3	3	There is no longer any understanding of truth or will of good whatever.
4-5	4	They do not acknowledge God.
6	3	They are against good and truth.

7	17	The Lord will save those who are of the church, from which they will have joy from Him.
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They have corrupted, they have made abominable their action (verse 1).

AC 622. Here “what is corrupt” is dreadful persuasions, and “abominable” the foul cupidities which are in “*their action*,” or from which “*their action*” is done.

Jehovah shall give the salvation of Israel, when He shall turn back the captivity of His people (verse 7).

AE 460:2. Everything of salvation and of eternal life is from the Lord, and is *with* man and angel; for all the good of love and all the truth of faith with man are the Lord’s with him, and not the man’s. For it is the Divine going forth, which is the Lord in heaven with the angels and in the church with men; and from the good of love and the truth of faith come salvation and eternal life.... [In this psalm] the Lord is here called “salvation,” from the act of saving, and for the reason that He is salvation with man, for so far as the Lord is with man, so far man has salvation.

Jehovah turns back the captivity of His people.

AR 591. By “captivity” is here meant spiritual captivity, which is to be seduced, and thus led away from truths and goods (that is, from believing well and living well), and led into falsities and evils.

Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad.

AE 811:22. “Jacob shall rejoice, Israel shall be glad,” means the joy with those who are in the external church and of those who are in the internal church because of their deliverance. “Jacob” means those who are of the external

church, and “Israel” those who are of the internal church; and both mean gentiles.

Further about the vastation of the Church

AC 410. Vastation is of two kinds: first, of those who know and do not wish to know, or who see and do not desire to see, like the Jews of old, and Christians of the present day; and secondly, of those who, in consequence of their ignorance, neither know nor see anything, like both ancient and modern gentiles. When the last time of vastation comes upon those who know and do not desire to know, that is, who see and do not desire to see, then a church arises anew, not among them, but with those whom they call gentiles.... The reason why new light shines forth then and not before is... that then they can no longer profane the things revealed, because they do not acknowledge and believe that they are true.

Questions and Comments

1. These days it's not just in one's heart that a person may say, "There is no God." People say it proudly. Why does it follow that "they have corrupted, they have made abominable their action"? (See AE 460:2, D. Life 108ff.)
2. Militant or quiet atheism, even among priests, is a sign that the church is vastated. They do not want to know about the Lord's second coming. Can we help people in such states?
3. "Gentiles" are people who are not Jews or Christians and who have not built up a resistance to the teachings of the Lord's Word by heredity and environment. Can we share the Heavenly Doctrine with gentiles?

Psalm 49

- 1 To the victor; for the sons of Korah, a psalm.
Hear this, all the peoples;
Give ear, all you that dwell *in this* lifetime;
- 2 Even the sons of Man, even the sons of a man³,
The rich and the needy together....
- 5 Why should I fear in the days of evil?
The iniquity of my heels surrounds me.
- 6 Those who trust in their belongings,
And praise themselves in the multitude of their riches,
- 7 Ransoming, a brother will not ransom⁴ a man^o;
He will not give to God an atonement for him....
- 10 For he sees that the wise die,
The senseless one and the brutish one perish together,
And leave their belongings to others.
- 11 Their inward *thought is*
That their houses will be to eternity,
Their habitations for generation and generation;
They call by their *own* names the *tracts of ground*.
- 12 But man, *who is in what is* precious, does not abide;
He is similar to the beasts *that are cut off*....
- 14 As a flock they are put in hell;
Death shall pasture them....
- 15 Surely God will ransom my soul from the hand of hell;
For He will receive me. Selah.
- 16 Fear not when a man^o is enriched,
When the glory of his house multiplies;
- 17 For in his death he shall take nothing;
His glory shall not go down after him....
- 18 For in his life he blesses his soul
And they confess thee, that thou doest good to
thyself....

³ In the Kempton Revision, a man^o (with a little circle) means a "male."

⁴ i.e., cannot ransom

verses	topic	Summary of the Spiritual Sense
title, 1-4	2	Let there be attention to the following:
5-6	2	About those who are merely natural, and boast of [their] knowledges and their own intelligence.
7-9	2	No salvation comes from that source.
10- 13	2, 15	However much they may boast of such things, they perish,
14	2, 15	and come into hell.
15	17	Salvation is solely in the Lord.
16- 20	2	Knowledge and one's own intelligence does not save after death.

The sons of Man, the sons of a man^o, the rich and needy (v.1-3)
 AE 724:23. "The sons of Man" [*homo*] signify spiritual truths from the Lord through the Word, which are doctrinals, and "the sons of man" [*vir*] signify rational and natural truths that are from the understanding; thus they signify the understanding of the Word. "The rich and the needy" signify those who attain much wisdom from these [truths] and those who attain but little.

The iniquity of my heels surrounds me (verse 5).

AC 259. ... By the "heel" is meant the lowest natural or bodily [part].... The most ancient people... referred man's celestial and spiritual things to the head and face; what comes forth from these, as charity and mercy, to the chest; natural things, to the [lower legs and] feet; lower natural things, to the soles of the feet; and the lowest natural and corporeal things, to the heel.... The mode in which the serpent destroyed those lowest natural things... among the Jews, by sensuous things, traditions, trifles, and by the love of self and of the world; and how at this day he has destroyed and continues to destroy them by the things of

sense, of memory-knowledge, and of philosophy, and at the same time by the same loves, shall of the Lord's Divine mercy be told hereafter.

The senseless one and the brutish one (verse 10, 20).

AC 9140. The signification of a "beast of burden" [is] bodily pleasure, or appetite. That it signifies with but little consciousness, is because when a man is in these cupidities, he consults reason but little, and thus has but little consciousness of what he is doing.... For the more a man acts from the body, the less he acts from reason, the body being in the world, thus remote from heaven, where genuine reason is. Moreover, in the original tongue a "beast of burden" is so called from its brutishness and stupidity, thus from its little consciousness; as in Ps. 49:10.

Questions and Comments

1. In the natural sense, this psalm is against setting our heart on riches and the pride of wealth. In the spiritual sense, wealth corresponds to having a lot of knowledge, especially of the Word. Which is a more serious problem today: pride in wealth, or pride in one's own intelligence?
2. "The iniquity of our heels" still surrounds us, as the loves of self and the world destroy people's faith in the Word and a life according to it by things of sense, memory-knowledge and philosophy. What is an example?
3. Twice this psalm says, "Man, *who is in what is precious, and understands not, is similar to the beasts that are cut off*" (vss. 12, 20). How can we apply this to ourselves, so the church is not vastated in us?

Day Four: The rejection of the Lord by the church

Psalm 64

1 To the victor; a psalm of David.

Hear my voice, O God, in my contemplation;
Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.

2 Hide me from the *secret* council of evildoers,
From the tumult of the workers of iniquity;

3 Who sharpen their tongue as a sword;
They aim⁵ their arrow, a bitter word,

4 To shoot in hiding *places* at the perfect one;
Suddenly they shoot and fear not.

5 They strengthen themselves *in* an evil word⁶.
They give an account to conceal snares.

They say, Who will see them?

6 They search for perversities.

We have finished a searching search;

And the inward parts⁷ of a man^o, and the heart, *are* deep.

7 But God will shoot at them *with* an arrow;
Sudden shall be their smittings.

8 And they shall make him to stumble;
Their own tongue *is* against them.

All who see them shall flee away.

9 And every man shall fear.

And they shall tell the work of God,

And shall have intelligence *of* His deeds.

10 The just shall be glad in Jehovah, and shall have
confidence in Him;

And all the upright of heart shall glory.

verses	topic	Summary of the Spiritual Sense
title, 1-6	4	The lying-in-wait of the evil against the Lord.

⁵ Literally, "tread" or "bend the bow with"

⁶ Or "matter"

⁷ As in AE 313:13; or "belly," as in AE 622:9

7-8	4	They will perish.
9-10	17	Thus the good will be saved.

Who sharpen their tongue as a sword; They aim their arrow, a bitter word, To shoot in hiding places at the perfect one.

AE 357:14. Because “a sword” signifies falsity fighting against truth, it is said, “who sharpen their tongue like a sword;” and because “arrow” signifies the falsity of doctrine, it is said, “they aim their arrow with a bitter word.” “To shoot in secret places at the perfect” signifies... to deceive those who are in truths from good.

And the inward parts of a man^o, and the heart, are deep.

AE 313:3 ...[B]ecause “the midst” [or “inward parts”] signifies the inmost it also signifies the whole. This may be illustrated by comparison with... all who are of the church on earth.... The Lord’s church is spread through the whole world; but its inmost is where the Lord is known and acknowledged, and where the Word is. From that inmost, light and intelligence are propagated to all who are round about and are of the church, but this propagation of light and intelligence is effected in heaven....

AE 313:13. The “midst of man” means the intellectual where truth should be; and the “heart” the voluntary where good should be; here, both of these perverted, the latter into evil, and the former into falsity.

A church needs to be completely vastated (stripped) of belief in everything true and good before a new church can be raised up, so that people do not profane what is true and good.

AC 408. When a church has been so vastated that there is no longer any faith, then and not before, it begins anew, that is, new light shines forth, which in the Word is called the “morning.” The reason why the new light or “morning”

does not shine forth until the church is vastated, is that the things of faith and of charity have been commingled with things profane. And as long as they remain in this state it is impossible for anything of light or charity to be insinuated, since the “tares” destroy all the “good seed.” But when there is no faith, faith can no longer be profaned, because men no longer believe what is declared to them; and those who do not acknowledge and believe, but only know, cannot profane....

AC 1008. ...[H]e profanes... who knows the truths of faith, and especially he who acknowledges them, bears them in his mouth, preaches them, and persuades others to adopt them, and yet lives in hatred, revenge, cruelty, robbery, and adultery, which he confirms in himself by many things that he extracts from the Word, perverting them and thus immersing them in these foul evils. He it is who profanes. And it is such profanity chiefly that brings death to a man....

Questions and Comments

1. We see people sharpening their tongues as swords and aiming bitter words at each other like arrows. Do we also see people today lying in wait against the Lord?
2. There must always be a church on earth that truly believes in and follows the Lord in His Word for life to continue on this planet. The church is the basis for the heavens to share spiritual light and intelligence to all. We can see how serious it is when a church is vastated.
3. Why must an old church be completely vastated before the Lord can raise up a new church? Why did the Lord speak in parables when He came?

Day Five: The vastation of the Israelitish Church

Psalm 78, part 1

verses	topic	Summary of the Spiritual Sense
title, 1-7	2	The Word was given to the children of Jacob, and they were confirmed in it by means of miracles;

5 And He raised up a testimony in Jacob,
And set a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
To make them known to their sons.

8-10	2	but their fathers and the children had gone back, and had not lived according to it,
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8 And it will not be as with their fathers,
A defiant and rebellious generation,
A generation that prepared not its heart,
And whose spirit was not faithful with God.

11-31	2	the miracles in the desert even having no effect, all of which involved how the Lord teaches and leads those whom He calls to His church. All these [miracles] recited.
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13 He split open the sea, and caused them to cross through;
And He made the waters to stand up as a heap...
17 But they added still to sin against Him,
To rebel against the Most High in the arid place.
19 And they spoke against God;
They said, Is God able to arrange a table in the
wilderness?
20 Behold, He smote the rock, and waters flowed and
brooks overflowed.

Is He also able to give bread? Can He prepare meat for His people?

- 22 For they did not believe in God,
And did not trust in His salvation.
- 23 And He commanded the ethers from above,
And He opened the doors of the heavens.
- 24 And He rained down upon them manna to eat,
And grain of the heavens He gave to them.
- 25 A man^o did eat the bread of the powerful ones⁸;
He sent to them provisions to their satisfaction.
- 26 He caused the east wind to journey in the heavens,
And by His strength He drove the south wind,
- 27 And He rained meat upon them as the dust,
And winged fowl as the sand of the seas;
- 28 And He let it fall in the midst of their camp,
All around their habitations.
- 29 And they ate, and were very satisfied;
And that for which they lusted, He brought to them.
- 30 They were not estranged from their lusting,
Their food was still in their mouth,
- 31 And the anger of God went up among them,
And killed among their fat ones, and made the young men of Israel stoop down.

32-37	2	On account of the miracles they returned, indeed, but only with the mouth, not with the heart.
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- 35 And they remembered that God was their Rock,
And God Most High was their Redeemer.
- 36 But they enticed Him with their mouth,
And with their tongue they lied to Him.
- 37 And their heart was not right with Him,
Neither were they faithful in His covenant.

⁸ I.e., the bread of angels

He rained down upon them manna to eat, And grain of the heavens He gave to them.

AE 146:4. The delight of heavenly love is signified by “eating of the hidden manna” ...It is called the “bread of the heavens” because it rained down from heaven with the dew. But in the spiritual sense it is called the “bread of the heavens” because it flows down from the Lord through the angelic heaven. In that sense... no other bread is meant than that which nourishes the soul of man. That “bread” is to be understood here in this sense is evident from the words of the Lord Himself in John, That He is the manna, or bread, that came down out of heaven (John 6:31-58).

Questions and Comments

1. In verse 2, the psalm says, “I will open my mouth in a prophetic enunciation; I will utter enigmas from ancient times.” Then it reviews the story of Israel in the wilderness and in Egypt. This illustrates that the whole of the Old Testament story is a prophecy of the Lord and a parable about regeneration.
2. The Lord is always seeking to “rain down manna” upon us, that is, to give us the delight of heavenly love, the delight of a useful life and of conjugal love. We receive it from Him so far as we trust in His salvation, and “estrangle” ourselves from lusting after merely worldly pleasures.
3. We can enjoy the spiritual sense of the Word and the knowledge of the Lord and the life after death, which are even more wonderful than the literal miracles described in the Word. But will our hearts be “right with Him”? Will we be faithful in His covenant?

Psalm 78, part 2

38-40	2	The Lord forgave them.
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39 And He remembered that they were flesh,
A wind that goes and does not return.

41-51	2	Again they were seemingly converted when they recalled the miracles in Egypt, all of which involve the removal and dispersion of the hells from them. A recital of these [miracles].
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44 And He turned to blood their rivers,
And their streams so that they could not drink.
45 He sent among them a flying swarm, and it devoured
them;
And frogs, and they destroyed them.
46 And He gave their produce to the caterpillar,
And their toil to the locust.
47 He killed their vine with hail,
And their mulberry fig trees⁹ with heavy hail.
48 And He closed in their beast of burden with the hail,
And their livestock with embers.
49 He sent against them the fierceness of His anger, wrath,
and indignation, and adversity,
A sending out of evil angels.

52-55	2	The Lord thus led them into the land which was the seat of the church.
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55 And He drove out the nations from before them,

⁹ In AC 7553:5, these trees are called sycomora, from a Greek word that means mulberry fig.

And allotted them an inheritance by a cord¹⁰,
And made the tribes of Israel to inhabit their tents.

56-58	2	Yet they backslid and worshiped another god.
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58 And they provoked Him with their high places,
And made Him zealous with their carved images.

59-64	2, 3	Therefore they were forsaken by the Lord, and delivered over to their falsities and evils; this of themselves.
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59 God heard, and was wroth,
And rejected Israel exceedingly;
60 And He abandoned the Habitation of Shiloh,
The Tabernacle which He inhabited among man.
61 And He gave His strength into captivity,
And His splendor into the hand of the adversary.

65-67	3	Thus they were rejected.
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67 And He rejected the tent of Joseph,
And the tribe of Ephraim He did not choose....

68-72	11	Therefore a new church was instituted, which would worship the Lord, and which the Lord could lead.
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70 And He chose David His servant,
And took him from the pens of the flock....
72 And he¹¹ pastured them according to the integrity of his
heart,
And led them by the understanding of the palms of his
hands.

¹⁰ Cords were used to measure a tract of land (see AC 9854:3).

¹¹ I.e., David, who represents the Lord (see AR 383)

He sent against them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and adversity, a sending out of evil angels.

AC 357. It is not that Jehovah ever sends anger upon anyone, but that men bring it upon themselves; nor does He send evil angels among them, but man draws them to himself.

AC 6997:2. ...[I]t is a most general truth that all things come from God, thus evil things as well as good. But this most general truth, which must be taught to children, youths, and the simple, should afterward be enlightened, that is, by showing that evils are from man, though they appear as if from God, and that it is so said in order that they may learn to fear God, lest they should perish by the evils which they themselves do; and afterward may love Him; for fear must precede love in order that in love there may be holy fear. For when fear is instilled in love, it becomes holy from the holy of love; and then it is not fear of the Lord's being angry and punishing, but lest they should act against good itself, because this will torment the conscience.

Questions and Comments

1. Why is it necessary for this psalm and the Word in general to sound as if God is angry? What good comes of this appearance, though it is not true?
2. Does it seem to apply to our church, that we can have seen miracles or wonderful things the Lord has done for us and for people we love by His Heavenly Doctrine, and yet we end up worshipping another god?
3. Why are "the successive [or stages of] vastation of the church," "the church totally devastated, and its rejection," and "the rejection of the Lord by the church," such important, frequent topics in the Word?