

THE SECOND ADVENT: MANNER, OBJECT, AND NEARNESS OF THE EVENT.

BY JAMES WHITE

TEXT: Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. John 14:1-3.

JESUS was soon to leave his disciples and ascend to the Father. And in his words of instruction and consolation he was preparing their minds for that event which would prove a grief to them. His presence constituted their joy. His absence would be their sorrow. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Matt.9:15. The real friends of our Lord will ever desire his tangible presence. Worldly professors, whose affections are placed upon the things of this life, will enjoy his absence quite as well. And while a worldly church may treat with indifference, or reject, or even scoff at, the Bible doctrine of the soon return of the Lord, those who truly love their divine Master will receive the word relative to his coming with all gladness.

Our Lord was tenderly introducing to his disciples the subject of his ascent to Heaven. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." John 13:33. "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards,"

Verse 36. This statement caused distress and consternation in the minds of the disciples, and led Peter to say to his Lord, "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Verse 37. Then follow the comforting words of the text, assuring the sorrowing disciples that their Lord would come again, and receive them to himself. With such a faith and hope, the waiting church of Jesus Christ may well sing:—

"How bright the vision! O! how long
Shall this glad hour delay?
Fly swifter round, ye wheels of time,
And bring the welcome day."

And while the church waits in joyous expectation of speedy deliverance, her Lord "saith, Surely, I come quickly," to which the church responds, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev.22:20. The certainty of the second advent of Christ, the manner and object of his coming, and the nearness of the event, are points of thrilling interest to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

HE WILL APPEAR.

He will *appear* the second time. Paul speaks directly upon this point: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. And unto them that look for him, shall he *appear* the second time without sin unto salvation.” Heb.9:28. Again he says, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious *appearing* of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Titus 2:13. Another apostle testifies to this point thus: “Behold, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall *appear*, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” 1John3:2.

PERSONAL AND VISIBLE.

The second advent of Christ will be personal and visible. This proposition is sustained by a large amount of testimony from the highest authority.

1. The Son of God himself, when addressing his disciples upon the subject of his second advent, pointed forward to the generation that should witness the signs of that event in the sun, moon, and stars, and said, “They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matt.24:30. See also Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; John 14:3.

2. Holy angels at his ascension made a most definite and decisive declaration relative to his personal and visible second advent. When Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives, his disciples looked steadfastly toward heaven to catch the last glimpse of their Lord as he was taken up from them. And as a cloud was receiving him from their sight, “behold, two men [angels] stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:10,11. The doctrine of the personal and visible appearing of our divine Lord here rests upon the veracity of the two holy ones in white, who testified that the *same* Jesus would return again from heaven, *in like manner* as he ascended up to heaven. And in agreement with these words of assurance are those of the Revelation: “Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.” Rev.1:7.

3. Paul testifies to the personal and visible second advent of Christ in language not to be misunderstood.

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1Thess.4:16,17. See also Titus 2:3; 1John3:4.

RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.

At the second coming of Christ, the voice of the Archangel will be heard, the righteous dead will be raised, and the living righteous will be changed to im-

mortality. It is then that victory over death and the grave is triumphantly shouted by all who receive the gift of eternal life at the last trump. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1Cor.15:51-55.

Again the apostle sets forth the hope and joy of the true church of Jesus Christ in all ages, while passing through persecutions and great tribulation, and while her members have been falling under the power of death and the grave, in these consoling words: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. [God brought Christ from the dead, and will also bring from the dead, with Christ, all the righteous dead.] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." 1Thess.4:13-18.

When this visible union of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall take place, then the church will be no more separated from her adorable Lord, but, with all the endowments of immortality, will ever be with him.

DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED.

When the Lord shall appear the second time, sinners then living will be destroyed by fire, and the earth will be desolated. "And, to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." 2Thess.1:7-10. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Chap.2:8.

The man of sin, the papacy, is to be destroyed with the brightness of Christ's coming. And, at the same time, those that know not God, the heathen, and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will perish under the vengeance

of flaming fire that attends the revelation of the Son of God from heaven. When the heathen, the papists, and all others who do not obey the gospel of Christ, shall be destroyed, there cannot be one wicked person living.

Christ's explanation of the parable of the tares of the field proves the destruction of all wicked men who shall be living at the time of his second coming. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Matt.13:38-42. That will be a clean work. When all things that offend, and they which do iniquity, shall be gathered out of the earth, there cannot be one sinner left in it.

The prophet describes the day of the destruction of the wicked, and the desolation of the earth, in those fearful words "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." Isa.13:9. "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." Chap.24:1. "The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; for the Lord hath spoken this word." Verse 3.

The voice of the Lord proclaimed to the prophet the blindness and deafness of apostate Israel, which led him, in anxiety and anguish of spirit, to cry, "Lord, how long?" And the Lord answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." Isa.6:11.

God speaks by the weeping prophet. The terrors of the day of the coming of the Son of man are portrayed in most fearful words. In the general slaughter there will be no escape for wicked men, though their profession be as high as Heaven. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground. Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock; for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished: and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape." Jer.25:32-35.

Isaiah is carried forward in prophetic vision to the point of time just prior to the general desolation, and describes the state of things when false professors shall be aroused to their lost condition. "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in fire. Hear, ye that are

far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? Isa.33:10-14.

Again the Lord hath spoken by another prophet: "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked: and I will cut off man from off the land saith the Lord." Zeph.1:2,3. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord. The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." Verses 14-18. "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." Chap.3:8.

PROMINENT AND IMPORTANT.

The second coming of Christ is a subject of great importance to the church. This is evident from the amount of testimony relative to it, in connection with the resurrection of the just and the Judgment, found both in the Old and New Testaments. The inspired writers, in their threatenings against the ungodly, in their words of hope and encouragement for the saints, and in their exhortations to repentance and holy living, hold up the great fact of the second coming of the Son of man, as that which should alarm and arouse, and also comfort the people of God.

Before Adam passed from the stage of life, Enoch, the seventh in the line of his descendants, proclaimed this doctrine in the ears of the impenitent, "Behold," said he, "the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Jude 14. And as we pass from book to book through the Bible, we find that the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles, have made the same use of the doctrine; and in the very last book, John describes a coming day, when all classes and ranks of men, because they have not prepared for the coming of Christ, will call for rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the overwhelming glory of his presence, as he appears in the clouds of heaven. Rev.6:14-17.

Christ's coming is also held prominently forth in the sacred writings, as the

time when the righteous will be rewarded. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear," says Peter, "ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1Pet.5:4. And Paul looks forward to the day of Christ's appearing as the time when not only he, but all who love the appearing of their Lord, shall receive the crown of righteousness which is laid up for such. 2Tim.4:8.

Most frequently, however, is this great doctrine used as an incentive to repentance, watchfulness, prayer, and holy living. "Watch," is the emphatic injunction of the Son of God in connection with the numerous declarations of his second coming in the gospels.

Paul exhorts to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:12,13.

James says, "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the Judge standeth before the door." James 5:8,9.

Peter says, "But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." 1Pet.4:7. And again, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." 2Pet.3:11,12.

Such is the use which holy men, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, have made of the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. Have not they, therefore, lost the spirit of the gospel, who openly contend against so prominent and weighty and precious a doctrine, or who even pass it by in silence?

Ministers and popular professors may cast this doctrine aside as not essential to the Christian faith; nevertheless, it may be traced through the sacred Scriptures, as made prominent by prophets, Jesus, and apostles. The Bible dwells upon essentials. It does not deal in non-essentials. When the Lord in his word gave his people a rule of faith and practice, he was careful to leave the non-essentials all out. Hence, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine." 2Tim.3:16. And let all the people say, Amen

ABSURD APPLICATIONS.

But the doctrine of the second appearing of Christ, made so very prominent in the Scriptures, is lost sight of by those who receive theories not found in the Scriptures. Thus the fulfillment of all the threatenings of God's word, relative to the swift approaching day of wrath, and the revelation of the Son of God in flaming fire, to destroy the inhabitants of the earth, as they were once destroyed by water, are put far into the distant future, if not completely lost sight of, by the unscriptural doctrine of the world's conversion and the temporal millennium.

The second personal appearing of Jesus Christ is most absurdly applied to several different things. Some teach that death is the second coming of Christ. This is not only a violation of plain Scripture declarations, but of the laws of language. There can be but a single second advent of Christ; while this misty senti-

ment has as many appearings of Jesus as there are deaths. The early disciples did not receive the idea that death was the second coming of Christ.

Peter, seeing the beloved John, "saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" John 21:21-23. So far were the disciples from holding that death was the second coming of Christ, that when they understood their Lord to intimate that John might remain until his return, they at once concluded that he would not die,

And what foggy theology is this, that makes death the second appearing of Christ! He is coming as the Life-giver, and the believer's best friend. Death is the life-taker, and man's last enemy. 1Cor.15:26. Christ is coming to give life to the just, and to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb.2:14. The devil has the power of death, and, in the providence of God, is permitted to send the barbed arrow even to the heart of the just, lay him low in death, and lock him in the tomb. But the Life-giver, having passed under the dominion of death, and having been gloriously raised from the embrace of the grave, triumphantly says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [hades, the grave] and of death." Rev.1:18. The devil holds the power of death. Christ holds the keys of death and the grave, and at his second appearing he will unlock the tombs of the just, break the power of death, their last enemy, and lead them forth to immortal and eternal scenes of glory.

Again, conversion is said to be the second coming of Christ. Then there are as many second comings of Christ as there are conversions. There can be but one second appearing of Jesus Christ. And again, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit are said to be the second advent of Christ. Hence, men talk of the spiritual coming of Christ, and his spiritual reign for one thousand years. But here, also, they are involved in the difficulty of a plurality of second comings of Christ; for in this case they would have Christ appear at each gracious manifestation of the Holy Spirit. There can be but a single second advent of Christ.

The distinction between the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and the personal presence of Christ at his second appearing is made very plain in the Scriptures. Says Jesus, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." John 14:16. This language implies the distinct existence of more than one comforter. When Christ was with his people, he was their comforter. In his absence, the Father was to send another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth. During the absence of the Son, the Holy Spirit was to be his representative, and the comforter of his sorrowing people.

The facts in the case are distinctly stated in the following impressive words: "But now I go my way to Him that sent me." "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart,

I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” John 16:5,7,8.

And again, the Shakers see the second appearing of Christ in the person of Ann Lee. And the Mormons see the fulfillment of the prophecies relative to the coming and kingdom of Christ in the gathering of “the latter-day saints.” And the spiritualists generally agree in saying, Lo, here is the second advent of Christ in the manifestations of spiritualism.

In the prophetic discourse of Matt. 24 and 25, covering the entire Christian age, our Lord, after speaking of the tribulation of the church under papal persecutions, says of our time: “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Matt.24:23,24. The world then in this passage points to a specific period of time when “Lo, here is Christ, and Lo, he is there,” would be heard. Our Lord here describes the spiritual deceptions of the present age. False christs arose not far from the first advent, to deceive the Jews in regard to that event (Matt.24:5); likewise false christs and false prophets have arisen at this day to deceive the people on the subject of the second advent.

Dr. Henshaw, the last Bishop of Rhode Island, speaking of the doctrine of the temporal millennium, in his Treatise on the Second Advent (page 115), says:—

“So far as we have been able to investigate its history, it was first advanced by the Rev. Dr. Whitby,* the commentator, and afterwards advocated by Hammond, Hopkins, Scott, Dwight, Bogue, and others, and has been received without careful examination by the majority of evangelical divines in the present day. But we may safely challenge its advocates to produce one distinguished writer in its favor who lived before the commencement of the eighteenth century. If antiquity is to be considered as any test of truth, the advocates of the pre-millennial advent and personal reign of Christ with his saints upon earth, need have no fears of the result of a comparison of authorities with the supporters of the opposite theory.”

And from the modern and popular error of the temporal millennium and the spiritual reign of Christ have grown those mystical applications by which the plainest declarations of Scripture relative to the second appearing of the Life-giver, are applied to death, to conversion, to the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, to shakerism, to mormonism, and to spiritualism.

LO, HERE! LO, THERE!

How forcible then, are the words of Christ when applied to the subject before us: “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.” Matt.24:23. No one need fail to see who the men are that are crying, “Lo, here is Christ, and, Lo, he is there! The Lord continues in verses 25,26: “Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the

* Daniel Whitby, D.D., was born A.D. 1638, in England, and died A.D. 1727.

desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." Our Lord is here dwelling upon what he had just before told them. His subject is still the teachings of those who cry, "Lo, here is Christ!" "Lo, he is there!" If the Mormons say, "Behold, he is in the desert," the injunction of our Lord is, "Go not forth." Or, if you hear proclaimed from the popular pulpits of our time. "Behold, he is in the secret chambers," Christ's second coming is spiritual, at death, or at conversion, "believe it not."

And why not receive such mystical teachings? The reason is given in the next verse: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Our Lord has not only pointed out false prophets, and warned us against their mystical teachings, but he has in contrast set before us the manner of his second coming in the plainest terms. The vivid lightning, flashing out of the distant east, and shining even to the west, lights up the whole heavens. This, probably, is the most appropriate figure that our Lord could employ to illustrate the flaming glory that will attend his second advent, when he shall come attended by all the holy angels.

The presence of only one holy angel at the new sepulcher where Christ lay in death caused the Roman guard to shake, and become as dead men. The light and glory of a single angel completely overpowered those strong sentinels. The Son of man is coming in his own kingly glory, and in the glory of his Father, attended by all the holy angels. All the holy angels are coming with the Lord. Not one will be left in Heaven. The number of the angels round about the throne as the body-guard of the Son of God, are "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." See Rev.5:11. And Paul speaks of the heavenly messengers as "an innumerable company of angels." Heb.12:22. What grandeur! what dazzling brightness! when the King of kings shall come down the lighted vault of heaven, attended by all the angels of the heavenly world! Then the whole heavens will blaze with glory, and the whole earth will tremble before him.

NOAH'S TIME AND OURS.

No truth of inspiration can be more clearly stated than that God reveals his designs to his prophets, that men and nations may be warned before their accomplishment. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7. Before visiting with judgments, God has sent forth warnings sufficient to enable the believing to escape his wrath, and to condemn those who have not heeded the warning. This was the case before the flood. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world." Heb.11:7.

At a later period, when the nations had become sunken in idolatry and crime, and the destruction of wicked Sodom was determined, the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed

in him?" Gen.18:17,18. And due notice was given to righteous Lot, who, with his daughters, was preserved; and none, even in that guilty city, perished without due warning. Lot evidently warned the people; and, in thus communing with them, was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." 2Pet.2:7,8. When he warned his sons-in-law, "he seemed as one that mocked." Gen.19:14. And when "the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter," Lot warned them, and entreated them to desist from their wickedness. And they at once did that which all sinners, since the days of righteous Lot, have been disposed to do to those who faithfully warn them of their sins; namely, they charged him with being a judge.

Before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, a forerunner was sent to prepare the way before the Lord. Those who did not receive Christ were rejected, "because," as he said to Jerusalem, when warning the people of the destruction of their city and temple, "thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke 19:44. We have on record the Lord's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem during the time of the generation that rejected him, which was fulfilled in less than forty years from the time of his crucifixion. And, that the Christians in Judea might escape its impending doom, they were told that when they should "see Jerusalem compassed with armies," or, as recorded by Matthew, "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place," they were to "flee to the mountains." Luke 21:20; Matt.24:15. They heeded the admonition, and escaped in safety to Pella.

Such is the testimony of inspiration respecting the dealings of God with his people in past ages. And it cannot be supposed that he will change his course relative to the future, when that future is to realize the crowning consummation of all prophetic declarations.

We accept the Bible as a revelation from Heaven. What God has revealed in that book, let no man call a mystery, or a secret of the Almighty. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." Deut.29:29. If the sacred Scriptures do not designate any period in particular for the second appearing of Christ, then men should at once abandon the search for proofs of his soon coming. But if prophecy, in a most harmonious manner, does point to the period of that great event, and if there is evidence that "it is near, even at the doors," the subject at once assumes vast importance.

Can anything be learned from the Bible relative to the period of the second advent? is a question unsettled in many minds. This is a grave inquiry, and, from the nature of the subject, is worthy of close investigation and candid answer. How did Christ himself treat the subject? When the disciples inquired, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the world?" he did not reprove them for prying into that which was purposely hidden from all men. No, he answered them in the most definite manner. He even states that there should be signs of that event, and adds, "When ye shall see all these things, know that

it is near, even at the doors.” The simple fact that the Lord mentions signs of his second advent is the best proof possible that his people were not to remain ignorant of the relative nearness of the event. Add to this evidence his declaration that when these signs should be seen, his people should know that it was near, even at the doors, and the case becomes an exceedingly strong one.

The prophecies, especially those of Daniel and John, clearly point to the period of the second coming of Christ, but do not give the definite time of that event. Some of the prophetic periods reach to the time of the end. Others extend still further down very near the end itself, to an event of which we shall speak when we consider the subject of the sanctuary of the eighth chapter of Daniel. But none of the periods of Daniel reach to the second appearing of Christ.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God for our instruction, faith, and practice. The prophetic numbers of Daniel and John are a part of that inspired word, and were especially designed to guide the people of God in the solemn warning to the people of the last generation to prepare for the coming of the Son of man. And having reached the period to which the prophecies distinctly point as the time of expectation, preparation, waiting, and watching, we should feel the force of that class of admonitory declarations from Christ, especially applicable to our time, like these words in Mark 13:33: “Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.”

DEFINITE TIME HIDDEN.

The definite time of the second advent of Christ is purposely hidden from man. “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven; but my Father only.” Many hastily conclude from this text that nothing whatever may be ascertained relative to the period of the second advent. But, in taking this position, they greatly err, in that they make this class of texts prove too much, even for their unbelief, and which at the same time arrays these declarations against others uttered by the Saviour, the most plain and pointed. We object to this position:

1. Because our Lord, after stating that the sun should be darkened, and that the moon should not give her light, and that the stars should fall from heaven, gives the following forcible parable, and makes the most distinct application of it to this subject. He says: “Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” Matt.24:32,33. No figure should exceed the fact illustrated in a single particular. This being the case in the parable of the fig-tree, the point becomes an exceedingly clear one. No language can be more direct. No proof can be more complete. With all that certainty with which we know that summer is nigh when we see the buds and the leaves shoot forth from the trees in spring, may we know that Christ is at the doors. The most daring unbelief will hardly venture to deny these words of the Son of God, and assert that nothing can be known of the period of his second coming.

2. Because our Lord declares that as the days of Noah were, so should also the coming of the Son of man be. Said God to Noah, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Gen.6:3. The period of the flood was given to the patriarch. And under the direct providence of God, he prepared the ark and warned the people. So the fulfilling prophecies and the signs distinctly declare that the second coming of Christ is at the doors, and the solemn message of warning has gone forth.

3. Those who claim that the text proved that nothing may be known of the period of the second advent make it prove too much. As recorded by Mark, the declaration reads: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." If the text proves that men will know nothing of the period of the second advent, it also proves that angels will know nothing of it, and also that the Son will know nothing of it, till the event takes place! this position proves too much, therefore, proves nothing to the point. Christ will know of the period of his second advent to this world. The holy angels, who wait around the throne of Heaven to receive messages relative to the part they act in the salvation of men, will know of the time of this closing event of salvation. And so will the waiting, watching people of God understand. An old English version of the passage reads, "But that day and hour no man maketh known, neither the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." This is the correct reading, according to several of the ablest critics of the age. The word *know* is used in the same sense here that it is by Paul, in 1Cor.2:2: "For I determined not to know [make known] anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Men will not make known the day and hour, angels will not make it known, neither will the Son; but the Father will make it known.

Says Campbell, "Macknight argues that the term *know* is here used as a causative, in the Hebrew sense of the conjugation *hiphil*, that is to *make known*. . . . His [Christ's] answer is just equivalent to saying, The Father will make it known when it pleases him; but he has not authorized man, angel, nor the Son, to make it known. Just in this sense Paul uses the term know: 1Cor.2:2: 'I came to you *making known* the testimony of God; for I determined to *make known* nothing among you but a crucified Christ.' "

Albert Barnes, in his Notes on the Gospels, says, "Others have said that the verb rendered knoweth means sometimes to make known, or to reveal, and that the passage means, 'that day and hour none maketh known, neither the angels, nor the Son, but the Father.' It is true the word has sometimes that meaning, as 1Cor.2:2."

The Father will make known the time. He gave the period of the flood to Noah, which well represents the proclamation of the second advent, given in connection with the evidence of the termination of the periods of Daniel, during the great second advent movement. And when the patriarch's work of warning and

building was finished, God said to him, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights."

So when the waiting, watching, toiling time shall be finished, and the saints shall all be sealed, and shut in with God, then will the voice of the Father from Heaven make known the definite time.

As we look back to the great movement upon the second advent question and its disappointment, and to the numerous efforts to adjust the prophetic periods by many of the first-day Adventists since that time, and the numerous disappointments which have followed, we can but feel the force of the words of the prophet: "Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God: I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged; for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God." Eze.12:22-25.

"I will speak" saith the Lord, "and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass." The voice of God will be heard from on high in the midst of the awful scenes just preceding the second advent. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of Heaven, from the throne, saying, *It is done.*" Rev.16:17. See also Joel 3:16; Jer.25:30.

The burden of the prophecy of Ezekiel, quoted above, evidently is time. "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." God will make this proverb to cease, by speaking himself. In this way the Father will make known the time, a work not given into the hands of men, angels, nor even the Son.

The present is emphatically the waiting, watching time. It is the especial period of the patience of the saints. Rev.14:12. In definite time we would find relief from the state of suspense to which our present position subjects us. The Lord appeals to us thus: "Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:35-37.

THIS GENERATION.

The time of Christ's coming is near. The signs of his second advent, in the sun, moon, and stars, have been fulfilled.* He is near, even at the doors. "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." Those who suppose that our Lord here speaks of the generation living

* The historical facts relative to the supernatural darkening of the sun and moon, May 19, 1780, and the falling stars of November 13, 1833, will be given in a discourse devoted to the subject of the signs.

who listened to his teachings, should consider the following facts:—

1. It is certainly true that what is embraced in the phrase, “all these things,” was not fulfilled in that generation. The darkening of the sun and the moon, and the falling of the stars, mentioned by our Lord, did not occur in that generation.

2. It could not be the generation living in the days of his flesh, for he said to them (Luke 11:29), “There shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet.”

It is evident that our Lord refers to the generation who were to see the signs fulfilled, and who were to be instructed by the parable of the fig-tree. In this prophetic discourse, he leads the minds of his disciples down over the events of the Christian age, mentions the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, which were to appear in the last generation, and then declares that this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled. In like manner, Paul carries his brethren forward to the resurrection, when he says, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” 1Cor.15:51,52. Or, “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” 1Thess.4:17. The things here mentioned by the apostle did not take place in his day. They have not yet taken place. Notwithstanding, he speaks of them as though they would take place in his day, and he have a part in them.

Also, in like manner is the mind carried backward in Ps.95:10: “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.” The generation here spoken of provoked the Lord in the wilderness long before David lived. He goes back and speaks of it as though it were present.

In this manner our Lord goes forward, and speaks of the last generation as though it were present.

We do not believe that the phrase, “this generation,” marks any definite number of years. Some suppose that our Lord designed to teach that some who were witnesses of the dark day in 1780 would live to witness the second coming of the Saviour. But it is our opinion that the Lord designed to teach that the people who should live at the time of the fulfillment of the last sign (the falling stars of 1833), and should hear the proclamation of the coming of Christ, based partly upon the fulfilled signs, should witness the scenes connected with his coming.

The proclamation of the coming and kingdom of Christ is given to the last generation. God did not send Noah to preach to the next to the last generation before the flood, but to the last. The very generation which was destroyed by the waters of the flood saw Noah build the ark, and heard his warning voice. So God has raised up men to give the solemn warning to the world at the right time to give force to the warning. And the very generation of men that live after the three great signs are fulfilled, and who hear and reject the warning message from Heaven, will drink the cup of the unmingled wrath of God. For such, the seven last plagues are reserved. And those of this very generation who receive the message, suffer disappointments, and endure the trials of the waiting position, will

witness the coming of Christ, and exclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." Isa.25:9.

With what emphasis our Lord gave utterance to this sentiment. It is a rebuke upon our unbelief. As we read it, God help us to believe it: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." And as though this were not enough to lead us to unwavering faith, he adds these forcible words: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Then follows, in the same chapter, the usual earnest exhortation of Christ, when speaking of his second coming, to watchfulness and a readiness for the event. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

One of the fatal consequences of not watching is distinctly stated in Rev.3:3: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." The consequence of not watching will be ignorance of the time. And the natural inference is unavoidable that the result of watching will be a knowledge of the time. In answer to the agonizing prayer of the Son of God, "Father, glorify thy name," there came a voice from Heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The disciples understood these words from Heaven, while the people that stood by said it thundered. John 12:27-29. So will the waiting, watching disciples of Christ understand the voice of God when he shall speak from on high. But the unbelieving world will not understand the voice. "The wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Dan.12:10.

THE FLOOD.

In comparing Noah's days and ours, the Lord continues: "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." A picture of the present condition of the mass of mankind is here drawn. How dark the features! The people of the last generation will be like those before the flood while the ark was preparing. Noah preached, and warned them of the coming flood, and they mocked. He built the ark, and they scoffed and jeered. He was a preacher of righteousness. His works were calculated to give edge to, and set home to the heart, what he preached. Every righteous sermon, and every blow struck in building the ark, condemned a careless, scoffing world. As the time drew nearer, the people were more careless, more hardened, more bold and impudent, and their condemnation surer. Noah and his family were alone. And could one family know more than s all the world? The ark is a matter of ridicule,

and Noah is regarded as a willful bigot. But the Lord calls Noah into the ark. And by the hand of Providence, the beasts are led into the ark; and the Lord shuts Noah in. This is regarded at first by the scoffing multitude as some thing wonderful; but it is soon explained away by the wiser ones so as to calm their fears, and they breathe easier.

The day of expectation finally arrives. The sun rises as usual, and the heavens are clear. "Now where is old Noah's flood?" is heard from a thousand impious lips. The farmer is caring for his herds and lands, and the mechanic is pursuing his work of building. On this very day, some are being joined in marriage. With many, it is a day of unusual feasting and sports. And while all are looking to long years of future prosperity and happiness, suddenly the heavens gather blackness. Fear fills every heart. The windows of heaven open, and the rain in torrents descends. "The fountains of the great deep are broken up," and here and there come gushing up rivers of waters. The valleys are fast filling up, and thousands are swept away in death. Some flee to the highest points of land; but the water fast follows them up. Men bear their wives and children to the mountains, but are obliged to part with them there to drown, while they climb the highest trees. But soon they, too, are covered with water, so that there is not a resting-place for Noah's dove. All are still in death. Horrid death! made still more horrible by being in consequence of slighted mercy! But where is Noah? Ah! safe in the ark, borne upon the billows. Safe from the flood; for God "shut him in."

EVIDENCES OF THE END.

By most people, the evidences of the soon coming of Christ are considered insufficient to base faith upon. But the testimony and acts of one man condemned the people destroyed by the flood. The evidences then were sufficient, otherwise the world would not have been condemned. But a hundred times more convincing evidences come pouring in upon us that the day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly. We follow down the numerous prophetic chains of Daniel, and of the Revelation, and we find ourselves in every instance standing just before the day of wrath. We see the signs spoken of by prophets, by Christ, and in the epistles, fulfilling or fulfilled. And at the right time, and in the right manner, to fulfill certain prophecies, a solemn message arises in different parts of the world: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." Joel 2:1. Wherever we look, we see prophecy fulfilling. While the knowledge of God and the spirit of holiness are departing, spiritual wickedness, like a flood, covers the land.

But these evidences are considered insufficient to rest faith upon. Well, what kind of evidence would the unbelieving have? "When the signs of the end," says the skeptic, "are fulfilled, they will be so plain that no one can doubt." But if the signs are of such a nature, and are fulfilled in such a manner as to compel all to believe in the coming of Christ, how can it be as it was in the days of Noah? Men

were not then compelled to believe. But eight believing souls were saved, while all the world besides sank in their unbelief beneath the waters of the flood. God has never revealed his truth to man in a manner to compel him to believe. Those who have wished to doubt his word have found a wide field in which to doubt, and a broad road to perdition; while those who have wished to believe have ever found everlasting rock upon which to rest their faith.

Just before the end, the world will be hardened in sin, and indifferent to the claims of God. Men will be careless about hearing warning of danger, and blinded by cares, pleasures, and riches. An unbelieving and infidel generation will be eating, drinking, marrying, building, planting, and sowing. It is right to eat and drink to sustain nature; but the sin is in excess and gluttony. The marriage covenant is holy; but God's glory is seldom thought of. Building, planting, and sowing, necessary for convenient shelter, food, and clothing, are right; but the world has gone wholly after these things, so that men have no time nor disposition to think of God, Heaven, Christ's coming, and the Judgment. This world is their God, and all their energies of body and mind are devoted to its service. And the evil day is put far away.

The faithful watchman who sounds the alarm as he sees destruction coming is held up before the people from the pulpits of our land, and by the religious press, as a "fanatic," a "teacher of dangerous heresies;" while in contrast is set forth a long period of peace and prosperity to the church. So the churches are quieted to sleep. The scoffer continues to scoff, and the mocker mocks on. But their day is coming. Thus saith the prophet of God; "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt." Isa.13:6,7.

Most dreadful day! And is it near? Yes; it hasteth! It hasteth greatly! What a description given by the prophet! Read it; and as you read, try to feel how dreadful will be that day; "The great day of the

Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." Zeph.1:14-18.

Now we hear the peace-and-safety cry from the pulpit, and all the way along down to the grogshop. "Where is the promise of his coming?" is murmured from the impious lips of a thousand last-day scoffers. But the scene will speedily change. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction

cometh upon them.” The scoffing of the haughty scoffer will soon be turned to wailing and howling. “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.” Isa.2:11,12. “And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.” Jer.25:33.

That will be a day of mourning, and lamentation, and famine for hearing the words of the Lord. “I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.” Amos 8:10-12.

Now, the word of the Lord may be heard; but sinners in and out of the churches, with few exceptions, do not prize it. Then, it will not be heard; for the watchmen, set to watch and sound the alarm of danger, will be called down from their high stations. Now, the word of the Lord is carried to the sinner, and offered without money or price; but he treats it carelessly, or, may be, drives the humble servant of Christ from his door. But then will he go in search for it. “They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east,” but they cannot hear it. “They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but shall not find it.” From city to city, from State to State, from one country to another, will they go to find a man commissioned of high Heaven to speak the word of the Lord; but such a one is not to be found. All such will then have finished their high commission. The word of the Lord! The word of the Lord! Where can we hear it? is heard in every land. One general wail—the word of the Lord! goes up to Heaven, but the heavens are brass. Then will the people turn and rend the false shepherds, who deceived them with the cry of “peace and safety.” Children will reproach parents for keeping them back from walking in the truth, and parents their children.

The miser now loves his money, and holds it with an iron grasp. But it will be said in that day, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.” James 5:1-3. Now, silver and gold may be used to God’s glory, for the advancement of his cause. But in that day, “they shall cast their silver into the streets, and their gold shall be removed; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord.” Eze.7:19.

Now, the ministers of truth have a message to the people, and gladly speak the

words of life. They joyfully toil on, suffer on, and spend their energies in preaching to hearts as hard as steel, hoping that a few may be reached, gathered into the truth, and saved. But then, they will have no message. Now, their prayers and strong cries go up to Heaven in behalf of sinners. Then, they will have no spirit of prayer for them. Now, the church says to the sinner, Come; and Jesus stands ready to plead his blood in his behalf, that he may be washed from his sin, and live. But then, salvation's hour will be passed, and the sinner will be shut up in darkness and black despair.

The last plagues, in which is filled up the wrath of God, now bottled up in heaven, waiting for mercy to finish her last pleadings, will be poured out. Unmingled wrath of Jehovah! And not one drop of mercy? Not one! Jesus will lay off his priestly attire, leave the mercy-seat, and put on the garments of vengeance, nevermore to offer his blood to wash the sinner from his sins. The angels will wipe the last tear shed over sinners, while the mandate resounds through all Heaven, Let them alone. The groaning, weeping, praying church on earth, who in the last message employs every power to sound everywhere the last note of warning, lest the blood of souls be found in her garments, is now hushed in solemn silence. The Holy Spirit has written within them these prophetic words of their soon-expected Lord: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly." Rev.22:11,12.

The doctrine of the second appearing of Christ has been held by the church ever since her Lord ascended to the Father to prepare mansions for her reception. It is the event that consummates her hopes, terminates the period of her toils and sorrows, and introduces her eternal repose. What sublime scenes will then open before the waiting children of God! The blazing heavens will reveal the Son of God in his glory, surrounded by all the holy angels. The trumpet will sound, and the just will come forth from the grave, immortal. And all—Redeemer and redeemed, attended by the heavenly host—will move upward to the mansions prepared for them in the Father's house.

To those who really love their absent Lord, the theme of his soon return to bestow immortality upon the dead and living righteous is fraught with unspeakable blessedness. This event, with all its grand results, has always been the hope of the church. Paul could look over eighteen long centuries, and speak of it as "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13. And Peter exhorts: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." 2Pet.3:12. And Paul again, after speaking of the descent of the Lord from Heaven, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and their ascent with the living righteous to meet the Lord in the air, says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."