

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.

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."

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

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

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

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,

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,

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.

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

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.