

WHEN WILL CHRIST COME?

(DISCOURSE NO. VI.)

In our last two discourses we think we proved scripturally that our Lord's second coming will be of such a character that at first it will not be recognized by the world. They will eat, drink, build, marry, etc., as usual, and will not know that the day of the Lord has come. Since his presence is that of a spiritual body invisible to human eyes, he cannot be discovered by the sight of the eye. And to guard against the deceptions of antichrist, Jesus warned the Church not to expect him in any such way, saying, "Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert; go not forth: behold he is in the secret chamber, believe it not," because he does not so come. How important to bear in mind the manner of his coming, as we considered it last Lord's day.

At the first advent he did meet with them in the secret chamber and in the wilderness; he was then the word made flesh; he was then in the form of a servant for the suffering of death. But at the second advent he comes in the glory of his Father (a spiritual body) which no man hath seen, nor can see. (1 Tim. 6:16).

Jesus said, "As the lightning, so shall the Son of Man be in his day." (Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:24). Man can see by the destruction it leaves, where the lightning has been: so, in the day of the Lord, men will come to recognize by the national trouble and overturning that the great day of his wrath is come.

But while the world moves on in ignorance of the fact that the Lord is again present, should we expect the Church of Christ to be in the same darkness with reference to a fact of such interest to them? Certainly not. We should expect, however, that the great mass of those claiming to be of the Church, yet unfaithful to God,

would be under the same veil of ignorance that covers the world. Those who are faithfully watching unto the "sure word of prophecy" will know of his presence. "Ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should come upon you as a thief." (1 Thes. 5:1-5).

We have already answered objections against inquiring into the time of Christ's coming; and merely remark now that whereas neither Christ's disciples, nor angels, "neither the Son," knew of the time of his coming when Christ spoke those words, yet, when "he comes, with all his holy angels," those angels will know, Christ himself will know, and all of the Church who are not in darkness, shall know. But, "if thou shalt not watch, thou shalt not know." The Christian who does not watch will be overtaken of that day just as the world is overtaken.

The prophets foretold things which they did not themselves understand; for instance, Daniel, having seen a vision reaching away into the future, upon making inquiry as to the time, was told: "Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end;" then knowledge shall be increased, and the wise shall understand, but none of the wicked shall understand." (Dan. 12:9; 4:10); neither shall the unwatching servant and the unwise Virgins, adds our Lord. (Matt. 25). Peter speaks of this, and said that the prophets inquired and searched diligently as to what time, or what manner of time the Spirit did signify [i.e., whether the time given them was literal or symbolic time], unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us [the Gospel Church] they did minister. (1 Pet. 1:10,12). They were used as God's mouth-pieces simply, and laid up treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are developed and made manifest during the Gospel age, a little at a time, as "meat in due season", by the Holy Spirit sent

down from heaven, whose office is to guide the faithful Church into all truth."

Our God is a God of order. Everything that God does is in accordance with a definitely pre-arranged plan, and the times and seasons are no insignificant part of that plan. Notice that Christ was born on time – "In the fulness of time" God sent his only-begotten Son. (Gal. 4:4). Not before, nor after, but just when the time was full. Christ's first sermon was on time. He came preaching and saying, the time is fulfilled ...repent and believe the Gospel." (Mark 1:15). "In due time, Christ died." (Rom. 5:6). He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:4). During his ministry they frequently sought to take him, but could not "because his hour was not yet come." And just as sure as there is a due time for the Second Advent, and if now be the due time, the Spirit will guide God's faithful children into the truth on this subject. First, however, as we shall go largely to the Old Testament Scriptures, we stop for a moment to inquire: Have we anything to do with these Scriptures, or are we to derive all our instruction from the New Testament? I am almost ashamed to raise such a question, and would not, but that I am satisfied that many Christian people hold this opinion. One of the pastors of this city, a few days since, reproved a member of the flock for quoting as of any force a statement of the prophets. For shame! O, for shame!! To what did Jesus refer, when he said, "Search the Scriptures." Surely to the Old Testament, since not one word of the New was then written. What Scriptures did the Bereans search daily? The Old Testament. What Scripture did Christ explain to the disciples going to Emmaus when their hearts burned within them while he opened unto them the Scriptures? The Old Testament. In which was "Apollos mighty," and of which did Paul say to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures." And again, "All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable; that the man of God may be

perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work." And one reason why some men of God are so imperfectly furnished is that they lay aside more than two-thirds of God's word, the Old Testament, which Paul says would be profitable to them. So highly did Peter esteem the prophecy of the Old Testament, that he considered it better evidence than his own sight; and after telling of Christ's transfiguration "on the holy mount," and that it was given him as an evidence of the coming kingdom of Christ, he says, (2 Pet. 1:19) "We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn."

Peter corroborates Paul's statement that it is profitable; and informs us that it will continue to be useful "until the day dawn." The Old Testament is a great treasure-house in which God has locked up and sealed items of great interest and value to his children, and the New Testament is the key by which we gain access to them. Let us now examine what the sure word of prophecy says on the time of Christ's coming. There are several prophetic claims to which I desire to call your attention – one shows the length of the Gospel dispensation; but not directly; it does not read right out, the Gospel dispensation will close in A.D. – . No, that would not have been "sealed up" at all, and not only wise and watching, but all could understand that without difficulty.

No, it is not told so, but while just as plain as that, yet it is under cover, and you will see that it could not be understood without the New Testament key.

God has linked together the history of the Jewish and Gospel Churches by the peculiar tie of type and anti-type; and this typical character of the Jewish dispensation was frequently referred to by the Apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

From them we learn that it was typical in all its features – its laws (Heb. 10:1), its ceremonies (Heb. 9:9), its sacrifices (Heb. 10:11), its sacred days, its times and seasons (Col. 2:16,17), and also the exact length of its duration, as we shall see. [R599 : page 3]

If God has thus, in the Jewish dispensation, given us an exact pattern of the Gospel dispensation, that pattern is itself a prophecy. And what a clear revelation of truth should it be to us, who stand amid the closing scenes of the Gospel age, when nearly all of that prophecy has passed into history! With the keys furnished in the New Testament, the faithful student may now clearly read the times and seasons indicated.

Paul shows that the blind, cast-off condition of Israel is to continue until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in (Rom. 11:25). Their casting off from God's favor, and consequent blindness, began at the end of the Jewish age, and will terminate at the end of the Gospel age. So if we find the time of returning favor to fleshly Israel clearly indicated, we may know that the fulness of the Gentiles has been gathered in. [Into what or where will be a question for future consideration.] In other words, the end of the Gospel age will have been reached.

We have already seen the teaching of the word of God to be that in the next, commonly called the Millennial age, Israel is to be restored, Jerusalem rebuilt and reinhabited, and that the Jewish nation is to become the chief nation, and "Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth." When will this be? Do the prophets tell? Yes. The prophets teach that Israel, once God's specially favored people, who had "much advantage every way, to whom were committed the oracles [O.T.] of God," would reject Christ, and, in consequence, would become outcasts from God's favor as a chastisement for their national sin, and for the same length of time

that they had had his special favor; after which time they should again return to God's favor and forgiveness. Now let us briefly glance at their history and then I will refer you to the prophecy which so predicts.

The nation began its existence at the death of Jacob, in Egypt. While he lived they were not counted a nation, but a family, and in his dying blessing for the first time they are called tribes. The promise of national blessing and favor was given through Judah. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh [Christ] come." This God fulfilled, and though He often chastised them, and allowed them to go into captivity for their sins; yet he always showed them favor, brought them back, and preserved their national existence through Judah, as he had promised, and did not utterly cast them off from him until they had rejected and crucified the Lord of glory, a period of 1,845 years. Since that time, as they themselves say bitterly, God has shown them no favor; they have been outcasts "a reproach and a hissing among all people." (Jer. 29:18). Since their chastisement was to be of the same length, as the favor previously shown, it will be 1,845 years. It began with the crucifixion of Christ, A.D. 33, and the 1,845 years of their punishment, consequently ended in 1878. But we must not expect too much in a day. As they were 37 years in falling nationally – from A.D. 33, to A.D. 70, when their national existence terminated: so their rising again to favor and national prominence will require the same length of time, and will therefore not be complete until 37 years after 1878, or until the close of 1914. We also find another and distinctly separate line of prophecy (which we will give at another time), teaching that they will not obtain full control, of Palestine until A.D. 1914, which gives a period of 37 years for their rising, or a parallel to the time of their falling. Where is the Scripture which proves that their chastisement is equal to the favor that they once enjoyed? you ask.

Turn with me to Jer. 16:13-18 and read: "Therefore [because of sins before mentioned], will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there ye shall serve other gods [rulers] day and night; where I will not show you favor." This was not the Babylonian captivity, for Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees. Neither could the Syrian captivity be thus referred to, for Jacob was a Syrian (Deut. 26:5), and this was to be "a land that ye know not, neither do ye nor your fathers." This was to be their punishment: They were to receive no favor from God, but were to be driven out of their own land, and, as the next verse shows, were to become exiles in every land, just as we now find them.

They have always looked back to their deliverance from Egypt as a great and marvelous sign of God's favor to them; but their deliverance, now soon to be consummated, will be so much greater, that it will quite eclipse the former one. Let us read – "Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the North [Russia, where the greatest number of them are found], and from all the lands whither He had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land, that I gave unto their fathers; and first (before I so bring them back) I will recompense their iniquity and their sin DOUBLE" – verse 18.

The word here translated double is the Hebrew word *mishneh* and signifies, a repetition. The repetition can refer to nothing else than the time. It was not a repetition of the same method of dealing with them; for he just states that he will deal differently – he will cast them off and show them NO favor, etc. And it is now a fact of history that the time of their cast-off condition has been an exact

repetition in length of their time of favor, that is 1,845 years ending in 1878. They had 1,845 years favor and 37 years fall. They have had 1,845 years without favor, and will have 37 years of rising. But, some may think we base a great deal upon that one prophetic statement, and inquire, Are there other evidences? Yes, there are; but I dare to trust to one statement, of one prophet; for he is a mouthpiece of God, who cannot lie.

Let us hear Zechariah (9:9), he will tell us the very day they were cast off. Just five days before his crucifixion, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass in fulfillment of this prophecy. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Nationally, they did not receive Him with shouts of rejoicing; but the multitude shouted, Hosannah! for "if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." The prophecy demanded shouting and must be fulfilled. "Turn you to your stronghold, ye prisoners of hope:" Christ was their stronghold, had they but received Him; but they rejected Him, and therefore comes the denunciation. "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." [Literal – The other half.] This agrees with Jeremiah, and tells us the very day the favor toward them ended. Yes, says Paul, "because of unbelief they were blinded." Jesus wept over them, and said "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." This was their blindness. Then he begins to foretell the trouble coming. (Luke 19:41-44). But another prophet has a message on this subject – Isaiah 40:1. Here are the three principal prophets, all explaining to us about Israel, but they take different standpoints of observation. Jeremiah says, looking down future, "I will cast you out, etc." Zachariah's standpoint of prophecy was beside Jesus on the colt,

and he says, "Even to-day." Isaiah [R599 : page 4] takes his stand away down here, where you and I live, after they have had their equal time of punishment. Hear him: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her appointed time [margin], is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Believest thou the prophets?" I do. And when Jeremiah foretells that because of sin and iniquity they would have double, and Isaiah that that double having been ended the sin and iniquity is pardoned, I cannot help believing it. But let us inquire whether 1878 brought any outward sign of God's returning favor? I answer yes. The fig tree, which was withered up from the roots (Israel), is beginning to "put forth leaves." The year 1878 witnessed an end of Turkish oppression in Palestine, and by the treaty of Berlin a Hebrew, as Prime Minister of one of the greatest of nations, assumes its protection and guarantees its peace. And recently the statement is published that the Rothchilds, Sir Montefiore, and other wealthy Hebrews, have arranged for the purchase and colonization of Palestine. And Russian persecutions are now driving many thither. Truly, favor seems to be returning.

But where is the measure of the Gospel dispensation? Paul furnishes us the key for this in the text before mentioned (Rom. 11:25): "I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" – that is, Israel will remain blinded until the full company of the Gospel Church – the Bride, being taken out from the Gentiles for His name – have been selected, or have come into covenant relation with him, and thereby separated from the world. To express the same thought differently: while the Jews

were cast off as a people for 1845 years, from A.D. 33 to A.D. 1878, was the time appointed for the selecting of all who will be part of the Bride of Christ.

But as favor continued to individual Israelites, after that house as a whole was rejected, so after the rejection of the Gospel house (the nominal Church) as a whole, special favor to individual saints is still continued. The Apostles and early disciples, the "remnant" of Israel (Rom. 9:27) received the increase of knowledge and high privileges then due to the Gospel age, while all the rest of Israel were blind to them. So here, the **[R600 : page 4]** same class, the meek and faithful of the Gospel house, receive the increase of knowledge due in the dawn of the Millennial Age, and by means of this clear apprehension of the truth are being completed and perfected for their place in the glorious kingdom shortly to be made manifest.

Since the two houses of Israel – the Jewish and Gospel houses – stand in relation to each other as type and antitype, let us notice some of the parallels:

The law was a shadow of good things to come, and in the Gospel dispensation we find the substance which cast those shadows. We must bear in mind also that the shadow is not the substance, but that it has strongly marked features of similarity.

The Jewish house was a house of servants – "Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant." The Gospel house is a house of sons – "Christ as a son over his own house, whose house are we." (Heb. 3:5,6.) The founder of the typical house was Jacob, surnamed Israel; the founder of the anti-typical house was Christ, the true Israel of God. The typical house was founded on the twelve sons of Jacob, the anti-typical on the twelve Apostles.

In worship also they are pattern and reality. The pattern had a tabernacle into which the typical High Priest went every year to make a typical atonement. We have the true tabernacle, into which the true High Priest has entered for us. (Heb. 6:20.) And, as in due time the typical High Priest came out to bless the people typically, so the real High Priest will in due time come out to bless all the world.

There were under-priests there, who wore bonnets to indicate that they were not the head, or High Priest, while Aaron, their head, wore none. So we are told that the true Church, the body or bride of Christ, is likewise a priesthood, and that Christ Jesus is the head or High Priest of our profession. (Heb. 3:1.) As they offered typical sacrifices, so we may offer up spiritual sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 2:5.

They had circumcision of the flesh; we, says Paul, have circumcision of the heart. (Rom. 2:29.) They had a temple in which God's presence was represented; and Paul tells us that we, the Church, are built together a holy temple for the indwelling of God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:22.) In fact everything that they had was a type of what we have on the higher spiritual plane.

Their dispensation ended with a harvest, in which harvest-time Jesus was present in the flesh as Lord of the harvest, and the faithful disciples who followed in his footprints were privileged to be co-workers with him in reaping the fleshly house and gathering the ripened grain into the Gospel garner – into the privileged condition of the Gospel saints. In the beginning of that harvest Jesus said to his disciples, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest. I send you to reap," etc. John 4:35-38.

Just so the anti-typical or Gospel dispensation ends with a harvest, at which time Jesus is again due to be present, not now as

then in the flesh, but in glory, a spiritual being, invisible to human eyes. Say not now that there are yet many years and then cometh harvest; but, ye faithful children of God, lift up your eyes and look on the fields now, for they are white already to harvest. And every faithful disciple who now follows in the Master's footsteps has the privilege now of being a co-worker with him in reaping this harvest. Such are the angels or messengers referred to in Matt. 13:39, who are reaping under his direction. And he directs them through the Word by opening their understanding to discern the times and seasons there indicated, and the work to be accomplished therein.

Their harvest was a period of seven years, beginning with our Lord's ministry; and up to the time of his death (a period of three and a half years) special effort was made to enlighten the Jewish house, as a whole, with reference to its high privilege. But as a people their ears were dull of hearing, and they "knew not the time of their visitation." Though this was true of that house as a whole, yet there were scattered individuals here and there among them who were ready to believe and follow the Master as soon as the truth could be made clear to them. To this class the remaining three and a half years of harvest work was devoted. The sickle of truth presented to them separated them from the rejected and blinded Jewish house, and brought them under the Gospel dispensation of favor.

This seven years is the "seventieth week" of Danl. 9. Seventy weeks (symbolic time, weeks of years instead of days,) or 490 years, were set apart or determined upon Daniel's people, the Jews. Sixty-nine of these reach to Messiah, the prince. (Christ came as the Messiah at the time of his baptism, when he began his ministry, being thirty years old.) "In the midst of the week [the seventieth] Messiah shall be cut off [die] but not for himself." ("He was

wounded for our transgressions.") But, though cut off, and though their Church was left desolate, yet, as the prophet had predicted, "He shall confirm the covenant [seventy weeks' agreement] with many for one week," i.e., until the full limit of the promised seventy. Accordingly, Jesus charges his disciples to "begin at Jerusalem" with the Gospel message, and it was confined to them until the seventieth week ended – three and a half years after Jesus' death.

So the Gospel dispensation is the anti-type of all this. Its harvest also is seven years, plus thirty-three, beginning in 1874, where another line of Scripture proves Christ's presence to be due, and continuing seven years, in which the ripe wheat is being garnered and separated from tares, and thirty-three of consuming and removing the nominal system. The fullness (the elect number and membership) of the Gospel Church was due to come into covenant relation with God in 1878, when Israel's time of favor was due to begin; and yet, although the nominal Church was then cast off, and that house left desolate, the chosen vessels yet in that house must be separated and gathered into the barn, a position of safety and security, above the trouble which is coming on the Church nominal. That favor, ending in the fall of 1881, found all true wheat separated, at least in spirit, from the rejected, lukewarm, fallen, nominal Church. And all such gathered into this separate condition, will be ready to separate from it in name and person as they discover this to be the Lord's will.

The time of trouble coming on the Church nominal is for the purpose of gathering out of his kingdom (Church) all things that offend. (Matt. 13:41.) They shall be swept out by the incoming flood of infidelity, overthrown by the winds of false doctrine, and finally burnt up by the scathing reproach of the world when it comes to fully discover Babylon's hypocrisy. Blessed is the man

who has built his house upon the rock with the gold and silver and precious stones of truth. The floods may come and the winds may blow and beat upon that house, and the fire may test it, but it shall stand. Thus shall long-established and corrupt systems, claiming to be the Church of Christ, go down in complete wreck, and above its ruins the real, the true and faithful Church – a "little flock" – shall with Christ their head establish the glorious reign of righteousness.

If these things are so, we are living in an important time, and upon our present decisions and actions the weighty interests of our future hinge. It behooves us, then, to take heed lest our hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life. Let us lay aside every weight and run with patience. And seeing we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness – as the prospective bride of Christ making herself ready.
