



**The Personal Reign of Christ
Demonstrated**

Arthur A. Rees

The Approaching
Personal Reign of Christ
Demonstrated,

In a Lecture

Delivered in the Lyceum, Sunderland,
January 4, 1853,

Before Two Thousand Hearers, and Published by the Request of
the Audience,

By

Arthur Augustus Rees

Bethesda Classics

www.bethesdafreechurch.org

Contents

Preface	Page 2
Zechariah 14	Page 4
Other Passages	Page 11
Moral Necessity	Page 14
Outline of Coming Events	Page 17
Quotes from Others	Page 21
Practical Reflections	Page 28

Preface

The first impression of 1500 copies having been exhausted in 6 months, and the demand for the Lecturer still continuing, I am induced to issue a second edition; particularly as recent events render it more than ever necessary that the correct views should be held on the approaching reign of Christ.

I am persuaded that right or wrong opinions on this absorbing topic are the inlet to right or wrong views on many other important points. In whatever light we look on the millennium, in the same light shall we see the genius of the existent dispensation, the hopes of the Church, and the prospects of the world. Other doctrines may be, in a great measure, ignored in our communion with God's people; but premillennialism, or the reverse, leavens our whole experience, and characterizes our whole devotions.

A minister may hold adult baptism, church and state, infant sprinkling or strict communion, and yet not find it necessary to divulge his views for weeks and months together; but if he holds the personal, or spiritual reign, it is impossible not to betray his sentiments in almost every sermon and every prayer.

It is not a trifle, then, to wrong on this subject and it is because I think so that I have published my Lecture. I have been accused of dogmatism in my style, my answer is that I have spoken confidently, because I am confident; but I have neither spoken, or felt, a whit more confidently than dissenters speak and feel when they denounce Church and State, or than church men, when they denounce dissent; or than Calvinists when they denounce Armenianism, or than Armenians when they denounce Calvinism; or Baptist when they denounce infant sprinkling. The truth is that men like dogmatism well enough when it is all on their own side. I hold premillennialism strongly therefore I speak on it strongly. "*Deep impressions,*" says Matthew Henry, "*produce strong expressions.*" I have no doubt on the subject, and therefore I cannot speak doubtfully.

I have referred to recent events. Yes; during the last ten years, "God has spoken once, yea twice, but man perceived it not." He spoke in the Irish famine, He spoke in the commercial panic, He spoke on the continental revolutions, He spoke in the mysterious cholera - but He spoke in vain. He now speaks in a war which threatens universal disaster. Three years ago the Crystal Palace thrilled with the shout of "peace" whilst to the sound of "cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer," all nations bow down to the bright Babel which the people of England had set up. Ever since then Europe has been waiting to catch the echo from the voice of God. Man cried "peace" and longed for the Divine response, "peace!" The echo is heard at last, and now, reverberating from the ends of the earth, mingling as it approaches with the roar of cannon, and the din of arms, the answer is "War! War! War!" -

unnatural, confused war; Protestant England, Popish France and Infidel Turkey against Greek Russia, two brothers against a third, in behalf of a foe to them all.

What is all this? Does it betoken the conversation of Europe after forty years' peace preaching, publishing, and praying? Or is it the tottering of the great Gentile image in preparation for its final fall? O Christians, awake! *"For the night is far spent, the day is at hand."*

*Tis night but ah the joyful mourn
Will soon our waiting spirits cheer,
Yon gleams of coming glory warn
Thy saints, O Lord, that Thou are near.*

Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen. I do trust that, as the time draws nigh, the prejudices of Christians would give away before the advancing flood of disaster. I say prejudices, for as, when Jesus told His disciples in plain, unmistakable terms that He should be *"spit upon, scorned, buffeted, and crucified"* they did not believe Him, because their minds were preoccupied with far different hopes; so, when Jesus tells modern Christians, in no less simple language, that *"He will reign in Mt Zion and in Jerusalem, before His ancients gloriously;"* and that His twelve apostles *"shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* - they do not believe Him because their minds are filled with very different views; and what is this but prejudice?

And here, I cannot but remark, what a mighty lever is given to the Jews for upsetting the predictions of the first advent, by those who spiritualise prophecies of the second. Christ's sufferings, say modern Christians, are literal, but His reign is spiritual; very well, says the Jew, if you spiritualise the crown, why would I not spiritualise the cross? In other words, why may not *Isaiah 53* be spiritually understood?

But we, who literalise the crown, as well as the cross, can wrest this lever from the Jewish hand. We admit that their hope of a personal reign is well founded. We grant that *"the kingdom shall be restored to Israel"* - we allow that *"the Lord God shall give to the Messiah the throne of His father David;"* because He is as literally the king of Israel as He is the Son of David; and as we literalise the glories so we literalise the grief's; and ply the Jews with their own literally understood predictions in *Psalms 22, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 11 and 13.*

Finally, although the arguments of this Lecture have been assailed, yet, I apprehended, no competent judge will decide that they have been refuted.

A A Rees

Zechariah 14

My object in delivering this lecture is to draw the attention of those Christians who never hear anything on the subject to a truth which I believe to be of no minor importance in these days; I mean, of course, the approaching personal reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

That “there is a good time coming” “*when the whole world shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the sea,*” and when, in some sense, the Redeemer’s kingdom shall extend “*from the river to the ends of the earth*” - is universally allowed. But there is a wide difference of opinion amongst modern Christians (I say modern Christians because there was no such difference among the ancients) as to the manner how, and the time when this kingdom shall be established. Whilst the majority affirm (and, remember, the majority are not always in the right) that the present state of things shall gradually improve by the preaching of the gospel, and the extension of civilization, until all nations are converted, and the millennium is thus commenced; the minority as strenuously maintained, that this opinion is a mediaeval tradition, “grounded on no warranty of capital scripture,” and contrary to all bygone experience; they believe in common with the early church, and with some of the best and wisest Christians of the three last centuries, that the world, as a whole, will never be gained to God, till Jesus Christ, in person, shall descend from heaven, destroy apostate Christendom, convert the Jews, and constitute them His missionaries throughout the globe. It is not, however, my design at present to enter into the proof of details, I only undertake to show that the personal *and* spiritual reign of Christ on earth, in contradistinction to the spiritual alone, is the plain doctrine of the word of God. And so confident am I, both of the truth of this opinion, as well as of the invincible evidence that sustains it, that I am bold to ask you to wind up your expectations to the highest pitch. I am not taking all this trouble to prove a *maybe* - I shall either *demonstrate* my position or else patiently submit to the charge of presumption and folly.

In the three first verses, then, of this chapter, the prophet foretells a siege of Jerusalem which has never yet been accomplished. It cannot refer to the siege of Nebuchadnezzar; for the prediction was written long after that had occurred; nor can it apply to the siege of Titus, seventy years subsequent to the Christian era; for, first, there were none but the Romans engaged in that siege; whereas the siege of the text is conducted by “*all nations*”. Second, at the siege of Titus the entire city was destroyed, and the whole population were either massacred,

led captive, or otherwise scattered abroad; whereas at the siege of the text only *“half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off”*. Third, after the siege of Titus the Romans went on prospering as much as ever, whereas, after the siege of the text, *“the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle”*. Fourth, in the siege of the text there is an awful plague inflicted upon the foe; *“there flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume in their sockets, and their tongue in their mouth”*; whereas, nothing in any sense, occurred like this at the siege of Titus. Fifth, after the siege of the text, *“the Lord’s feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and it shall cleave in the midst thereof towards the East, and towards the West”*; whereas at the siege of Titus, no such event, in any sense, occurred.

Nor, lastly, has this prediction been accomplished in any subsequent siege of Jerusalem; for, since its destruction by Titus, the Jews, as a nation, have never possessed the city. It, therefore, necessarily follows that the siege and all its consequences are yet future. Indeed, I have no doubt that it is identical with that of the twelfth chapter, which all commentators admit to be unaccomplished.

But, I now draw your particular regard to the fourth and fifth verses. That the siege is future I have demonstrated; and as the rending of the Mount of Olives follows the siege, this must be future too. Next comes the vital question, in what sense are we to understand this extraordinary passage? For my part I cannot conceive how it can be interpreted otherwise than in its plain, literal, and grammatical import; for observe, first; the prophecy is not a symbol but a regular and serial narrative, and must, therefore, like *Isaiah 53* be literally understood; and, secondly; if it be not so understood, I challenge any theologian in the world to make the least consistent sense of it. Pray what is the spiritual sense of *“the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem, on the east”*; and of the Lord’s feet standing on it, and of its cleaving in the midst, and the one half by the force of the convulsion, removing toward the North, and the other toward the South? I assert, confidently, and I am sure that every candid mind will justify the assertion, that it either means nothing at all, or that it means what it appears to mean, namely, a literal earthquake, as the result of the Lord’s feet coming in contact with the literal soil. Nor is such an effect from such a cause, in discordance with other notices of scripture. Read *Psalms 114:5-7, 117:5, Isaiah 64:1-2, Exodus 19:16-18*. That the removal of the cleft mountain, one half toward the North, and the other half toward the South, must be literally

understood, is clear from what follows in the eighth verse for it is a fact that these *“living waters”* or, as the Hebrew may be rendered *“running or spring water”* could not possibly flow toward the *“former sea”*, that is, the Dead Sea, from Jerusalem, unless the Mount of Olives were removed; because that Mount stands *“before Jerusalem on the East”*, right between the city and the Dead Sea. The *“great valley”* made by the earthquake seems to be formed for this express purpose. I know well the mystical meaning which is given to the passage. It is the general diffusion of the gospel from Jerusalem; but this will not do; for the gospel went North and South as well as East and West; nay, it went North and South, namely, to Syria and to Egypt, before it went East and West, to Persia and to Rome. Besides, if half the water went East, and half West, then as two halves make a whole, there was none remaining to go in any other direction; whereas the gospel went to every point of the compass. The passage, too, evidently refers to the Millennium (*see verses seven and nine*). It is a gross anachronism, therefore, to apply it to the first preaching of the gospel, Notice two parallel prophecies in *Joel 3:18* and *Ezekiel 47:1*. But to put this matter beyond a doubt, we read in the third verse *“ye shall flee, as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah”*. Now, be it remembered that the earthquake in the days of Uzziah was a literal earthquake; and is referred to as a historical fact in *Amos 1:1*. Of course, then, the flight was literal too; and, since the Jews are to flee from the rending of the Mount of Olives *“as”* their forefathers fled from the earthquake of Uzziah, it follows that the future earthquake, and the flight in consequence of it, are both literal.

But still it may be objected, that although the earthquake is literal, yet the Lord’s feet standing on the Mountain may be spiritual. Please, then, do tell me what the spiritual meaning is. The prophecy, remember, is not a symbolic vision, but a simple narrative. What, then, is the mystical import of the Lord’s feet standing on the Mount of Olives, the result of which is a literal earthquake? If the Lord Jesus has a human body, surely it is no proof of fanaticism to believe that his literal feet shall stand either on the Mount of Olives.

But let us turn to fulfilled prophecy for a key to interpret unfulfilled. In *Psalms 22:6* we read, *“they pierced my hands and my feet”*. Now if the accomplishment of this prediction had not already proved it to be literal; every spiritualizing commentator would have exclaimed, *“pshaw! Who can believe that the Lord has literal ‘hands and feet?’ much less that they will literally be ‘pierced’ with nails?”* Again, in *Zechariah 9:9* we read, *“thy King cometh unto thee, riding on an ass”*. If this, too, had not been literally accomplished, every expositor of the

school of Albert Barnes and Thomas Scott would have cried out, “pshaw! Who can believe that the Lord will ride on a literal *ass*?” The same remark will apply to other literally fulfilled predictions, such as, “*in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*”. “*They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture*”. What spiritualizer could have believed that, 1,000 years before Christ was born, the Holy Ghost would distinguish between His literal “*garments*” and his literal “*vesture*”? Much less that He would mark the difference between “*parting*” the one, and “*casting lots*” for the other? And, “*He was numbered with the transgressors*”; “*not a bone of Him shall be broken*”; “*they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver*”; “*and I cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord*”. All these, and a hundred more, were fulfilled to the very letter; and if it is not absurd to interpret literally, in one unsymbolic prophecy - “*they pierced my hands and my feet*” - I seriously ask all the theologians in Europe, why should it be absurd to interpret literally in another unsymbolic prophecy, “*His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives*”?

But if more light be wanted on what is luminous enough already, perhaps the bright angels who consoled the Apostles for the loss of their Master will shed a few rays of their glory on this disputed verse (*Read Acts 1:9-12*). From this passage we learn that exactly as Jesus ascended to heaven, namely, visibly, bodily, and in clouds, so will He descend to the earth.

But from Zechariah we learn still more; we are told the very locality on which He will alight, namely, the Mount of Olives, and this by a comparison of the two passages, we discover that, as the feet of Jesus were “*lifted up*” from that Mountain at His departure (*Acts 1:12*), so they will “*stand*” on it at His return. As this is plain enough for a child, it is no wonder that it should be too plain for a scholar; though it is not a whit more plain, and certainly not less important than, “*a bone of Him shall not be broken*”. Do any hesitate yet? If so, let them at once surrender to the following words; “*ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee*”. What will spiritualizers say to this? If the latter clause had been omitted, they might, perhaps, have insisted on a spiritual coming of “*the Lord my God*”; but they can hardly venture to affirm, that “*all the saints*” come spiritually too. Should prejudice, however, still close the eyes to this demonstration, they will, I trust, be forced open by the parallel predictions of Paul and Jude (*1Thess 3:13, Jude 14-15*). Now, no one, I suppose, will have the hardihood to maintain in these two passages “*the coming of the Lord Jesus with all His saints*” is to be spiritually understood; otherwise, indeed, it would be

impossible to prove, from any text whatever, that Christ will come personally at all. But if Paul and Jude, in a plain and literal prophecy, are to be literally understood, then I seriously ask all the commentators in the world, why should not Zechariah, in a plain and literal prophecy, on the very same subject, be literally understood? I can see no reason why he should not, except the expositor's determination that He shall not. I conclude, therefore, without a doubt that the descent on the Mount of Olives, and the coming of the Lord God with all the saints, are literal, personal, and local; and that in this solitary passage, to say nothing of a hundred more, we have a knot both for spiritualizers and Unitarians to untie, which they will never disentangle, till they cut it with the sharp sword of neological interpretation. I say Unitarians, as well as spiritualizers; for, since it is Jesus Christ and not God the Father, who comes with the saints (*1Thess 3:13*); and since He who then comes is called by the prophet what He was called by the Apostle Thomas, "*the Lord my God*", the inference which a little child may draw is this, that Jesus is Jehovah-God.

But it may be objected - after all, this does not prove a personal reign, but only a personal coming. Well, if I have driven you up to this point, I fear not to drive you further still (*Read v6-9*). I confine your attention to the words - "*and the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day (mark the note of time) shall there be one Lord, and His name one*". Here then we have, confessedly, God's kingdom established "*over all the earth*". Here we have the great text of all missionary pulpits and platforms literally fulfilled - I mean, "*the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*". Here is the "good time" actually come. But when? Ah, that is the question. When? Reply nine-tenths of Christendom (and remember the majority are often wrong, especially in religion), why, at least a thousand years before the return of Jesus. *No such thing*, says Zechariah. *No such thing*, echo back "the glorious company of the Apostles". *No such thing*, rejoin "the goodly fellowship of the Prophets". *No such thing*, loudly answer "the noble army of (proto) Martyrs". *No such thing*, replies "the holy church throughout all the world" for three hundred years. "The good time" will come, and "*the Lord shall be King over all the earth*", when "*the Lord my God shall come, and all the Saints with Him*"; and, as I have proved that this coming is not spiritual, but personal, it follows that the second advent of Christ must introduce His universal reign.

Here, then, we have distinctly, irrefragably, demonstratively, the pre-millennial advent, and personal reign of Christ on Earth, which was the position I undertook to prove; and whether I have proved it or not, I leave to your

candour, not to your prejudice, to decide. My wall of proof being thus so firmly established, I need no buttresses of corroboration; but lest there should be some feeble folk on the battlements who dread an attack from the catapults of the foe, I shall heap up beside it a few heavy stones of collateral arguments. Read, now, the next verses, the 10th and 11th, bearing in mind that the whole chapter is one plain, regular, and consecutive prediction. Are these spiritual too? Does the prophecy of the reconstruction and safe habitation of Jerusalem mean nothing more than the revival of the Christian Church? If so, what haughty sect can be intended by the *"tower of Hananeel"*? What community is meant by *"Geba and Rimmon South of Jerusalem"*? Who, or what is represented by *"the King's wine-presses"*? What stout pillar of the Church is typified by *"the corner gate of Jerusalem"*? And thus we might go on with spiritualization, till your gravity were completely upset. But I forbear; understand the passage literally, and it is plain enough. Indeed, it is not the difficulty to understand it - not to understand it, that is the difficulty; and it would be amusing, if it were not shocking, to see how some mystifiers, like Jehoiakin with his penknife, cut and slash at this simple, honest scripture. There are no less than six different interpretations of the first verses of this chapter given by the following commentators: - Thomas Scott, Brown of Haddington, Grotious, Jerome, Clarius and Dr Urwick. Talk of the delusion of millenarians! If it be delusion, when God speaks, to understand black to be black, and white white, let me be more deluded still. I repeat it; understand the passage as a child would understand it, and it is plain enough; understand it as some learned divines, and it is either anything you please, or sheer nonsense. The "judicious Hooker" inflicts the following castigation on the *injudicious* mystifiers of modern times: *"there is nothing more dangerous than this licentious art which changeth the meaning of words, maketh of anything what it listeth, and in the end bringeth all truth to nothing"*.

But if the prophecy of the reconstruction of Jerusalem in the 10th and 11th verses, is to be literally understood, why should not also the prediction of the descent on the Mount of Olives, the resulting earthquake, and the coming of the Lord God with all His saints, be literally understood? I can see no reason why it should not, except the expositors determination that it shall not. Here, then, is one big stone of collateral proof by the strong wall of direct demonstration. Take another form of the 16th verse. Here is a prophecy that *"all nations"* - that is, I suppose, by their delegates - shall go up to Jerusalem from year to year, to worship the King; mark that, *"the King"*, the Lord of Hosts; but if the King were only spiritually present in every place, what need would there be of going to

Jerusalem to worship Him? If, however, He is personally present, and Jesus Christ is He - *“the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords”*, - then we can comprehend the national gathering to *“the city of the great King”*, the future metropolis of the world. In imitation of this reunion, Satan, the grand deceiver of man, and the arch-mimic of God, has suggested the pilgrimages to Mecca and Rome, the respective seats of the eastern and western apostasies. We have a parallel, and equally explicit, passage in *Jeremiah 3:16-17*.

Other Passages

To complete my side-buttrresses, I now pass to other quarries of the Bible. Zechariah has told us, not in a symbolic vision, but in plain words, that at the assembling of all nations at Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus shall suddenly appear with His saints, who had been previously “*caught up to meet Him in the air*”, for the deliverance of His ancient people, and the destruction of His foes. The very same scene is presented to us, not in a literal prophecy, but in a series of symbols in *Revelation 19:11-21*. The prophet Daniel, too, goes over the identical ground in *7:11-14*, compared with chapter *11:41-45*, *12:1*. See also *Joel 3:11-17* and *Zephaniah 3:8-20*. The great leader of the nations against Jerusalem and her Heavenly King, as we learn from *Daniel 11:36*, compared with *Revelation 8:1-7* and *19:19*, is the last ruler of the Roman Empire, that is, the Antichrist, who, there and then, is apprehended, and with the false prophet, “*cast alive into the lake of fire*”. And that this Antichrist is existing in full power up to the very moment of Christ’s return, is demonstrated by the plain and literal prophecy of Paul in *2Thessalonians 2:8*, which proves, by the way, that there can be no millennium before the second advent. The spiritual agents, by whom the last great rebellion is instigated, are evil demons, who, after long preparation, conduct the hosts of apostate Europe, headed by Antichrist to the East. This is clearly foretold in *Revelation 16:13-16*.

And as men and devils have combined together in this war against the Lord, so together shall they be punished. In *Revelation 19-20* we read of the destruction of the armies of Antichrist, of the arrest and imprisonment of Satan, and immediately after, of the glorious reign of Christ with His saints. Of these momentous events we have a singularly lucid prediction in *Isaiah 24:21-23*.

Again, that Christ’s kingdom and advent are synchronous, is proved beyond doubt, as was long ago observed by Dr Gill in *2Timothy 4:1* “*He shall judge living and dead* (there is no definite article in the Greek) *at His appearing and Kingdom*”. But if, as most commentators affirm, Jesus Christ, at His appearing shall destroy the world, and “*deliver up the kingdom to God their Father*” (*1Cor 15:24*) how could Paul, in the place above quoted, join “*His appearing and kingdom*” together? The same order of events is proved by the parable of the nobleman in *Luke 19:11-27* “*who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return*”, but did not actually reign till he came back to his dominions. So, Christ, during His absence in heaven, is indeed invested with the sovereignty of the world, but does not exercise His regal authority as man, till He returns to reign. In direct proof of this I refer you to His own words in

Revelation 3:21, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne". Here the Lord Himself declares, if you will believe Him, that He is not yet seated on His own throne, but on His Father's, and, consequently, that His kingdom is not yet begun. See too *Matthew 25:31, Revelation 11:15, 19:6.* And, indeed, who can doubt it, that remembers the plain unvarnished promise of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary? *"And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David (His own throne), and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever".* When was this promise accomplished? Is Jesus on David's throne now? We can understand how David's throne might be called God's throne; but, surely, it would be a very different thing to call God's throne, where Jesus now sits, *"the throne of His father David"*. The angel's words, therefore, shall be as literally fulfilled as the predictions, *"they pierced My hands and My feet", "and for my vesture they cast lots"*.

But the time would fail me to adduce a tenth part of the passages which prove that the advent of Christ is prior to the millennium, or, in more modern words, that *"the coming man"* must come, ere, *"the good time coming"* can arrive. I know that a thousand difficulties will start up in every reflective mind, and that, Nicodemus-like, the question will be repeatedly asked, *"how can these things be?"* especially by those who have never considered the subject before. The opponents of the Personal Reign, most of whom have reached their conclusions without examination, are perpetually fortifying their unbelief, by pointing to some of the most mysterious prophecies in the Bible, as for example, *Ezekiel 11-48*, and enquiring, with an air of triumph, *"What! Is the Jewish temple to be rebuilt; the land to be re-distributed; and the sacrifices offered again?"* Now, although these are interesting questions, yet they are inappropriate to mere tyros in prophetic study. The simple question for all beginners is, will the Lord come in person before or after the millennium, and this must be decided by plain texts, not by inferences from misunderstood difficulties, which, after all, is only an appeal to ignorance.

But in point of fact, the difficulties of the Personal Reign to us are not to be compared with the difficulties of the incarnation, and the death of the Son of God, to the ancient Jews. To them, no doubt, such an idea involved the grossest contradiction, and yet for all that it was true. In like manner, notwithstanding the numerous stumbling blocks to the reception of the doctrine I advocate, it will be found at last, that was with the Jews, so with the Gentiles, tradition and prejudice were the two chief opponents.

Indeed it has already been remarked by an eminent converted Israelite, *“that the Christians are almost as ignorant of the circumstances of their Lord’s second coming, as the Jews were of His first, and for the same reason”*, that is prejudice (Luke 18:31-34).

Would that they had attended to Hooker’s judicious caution, namely, *“that the farther we recede our interpretations from the letter of the Bible, unless necessity requires it, the farther we depart from the mind of the Spirit”*.

Moral Necessity

I now proceed to another line of argument, namely, the moral necessity of Christ's Personal Reign.

During the last fifty years, Europe, which is the soul of the world, has been so tossed to and fro, like a shuttlecock, between the battle doors of democracy and despotism, that its philosophers have at length come to the conclusion that a ruler is needed, who shall combine, in his own person, all the necessary qualifications for universal empire; a man of perfect goodness, profound wisdom, world-wide information, and resistless power. This utopian individual (for he is not to be found among the natural descendants of Adam) is called "*the coming man*" and the very expectation of his advent, is the secret cry of miserable humanity for a deliverer. What are all the commotions which have led to such an idea, but the incipient fulfilment of that remarkable prediction in *Ezekiel 21:26-27*, "*Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same. Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come, whose right it is, and I will give it Him.*" Compare *Haggai 2:6-7*, *21-22*, and *Luke 21:25-27*. Nor shall this cry be unheeded. "*The Lord's Christ,*" "*the King of kings,*" shall, ere long, appear to answer it, though he will be forestalled for a season by the devil's Antichrist, the man of sin. See *Revelation 13:1-7*.

On this part of the subject I quote a remarkable extract from "The Last Vials," sixth series, No 10.

"The Man, Christ Jesus, being heir to the throne of David by birthright, and possessor of the world by redemption, shall, in due time, enforce his claim to universal sovereignty, not as God only, but as man, and is now bringing on that crisis of despair which will render the necessity of his government visible to all; and in the midst of which he shall appear again as the sole and acknowledged Saviour of the ends of the earth.

"We have seen already the necessity of some supreme interposition to bring back prosperity and peace. Eighteen hundred years of Christianity have passed away; science and education, laws and councils, war and peace, learning and commerce, have been resorted to in vain. And after all our boasted progress, what is our condition? After eighteen centuries of Christianity; after eighteen millions of charlatans and pedants have brought forth their sickly progeny - where are we now? With a million of men under arms throughout Christian Europe, for the sole purpose of keeping down a conspiracy which has emanated

directly from the author of evil himself. Such is the result of all our boasted progress. We have been told, for half a century, that the world was advancing to perfection; and now we find that hell itself is ready to break loose. We were told that war had ceased, and that military force was no longer required; and now we discover that nothing but military force can preserve all continental Europe from a revolution the most horrible that ever man or devil has conceived! What is the conclusion from such undeniable premises? That human government has failed; no further evidence is required; it would only be a waste of words. If the world have arrived at such a crisis, in spite of its efforts at improvement - it is because self-improvement is impossible. Kings, statesmen, and philosophers have been baffled and out-marched by the lightning-speed of revolution. Man has kindled his feeble lamps to illuminate the earth, and the devil comes and blows them out at a single breath, leaving us still darker than before. We admit, or pretend to admit, that the spirit of Christ can alone convert and save the soul. Sooner or later we shall be forced to admit that the government of Christ alone, can renovate and save the world.

“The hand of Satan has been permitted to compress the nations, and to bring together the elements of evil within a perpetually narrowing circle. The despotism of Europe, once scattered and divided amongst rival states, has, within the last year, been gathered to a point at the conferences of Warsaw; and the great powers of the centre and the north are linked together in one, for the extinction of liberty. Within the last year, the Red Republicans of Europe have commenced their alliance, and have issued their manifestoes declaring themselves ready to take the field. Within the last year Popery has made a further effort to regain her authority over the Saxon race, as well as within the circuit of the Seven Hills. Within the last year the Great Exhibition, with its matchless display of magnificence and art, has elevated the pride of man, and confirmed him in the delusion of self-dependence and prosperity. On the one hand, with the fierceness of wild beasts, men prepare for devastation and slaughter; while, on the other hand, shut up within a peaceful island, they fairly close their eyes upon the horrible confusion of the world, and (like children who have been presented with a new toy) they clap their hands at the sight of the Crystal Palace, and look forward to the approaching holiday. The grasp of Satan has thus compressed the elements of evil within a narrower compass; it has brought them, like the rays of light to the focus of the burning mirror, and from that fiery point he is preparing the conflagration of the world. The common centre of all these various elements is enmity to God! To this point they all converge. Revolutionists, despots, papists, philosophers, men of commerce -

however they may differ upon every other question, are agreed upon one, and that is - that man is sufficient for himself; that he is advancing to perfection by his own wisdom. They may differ as to the means; some may trust to arbitrary power, others to commerce, some depend on education, others upon the wholesome effects of massacre and plunder. But, though differing in trifles they all agree in this - that the world has arrived at years of discretion, and that, if Divine Providence will only leave it to itself, it will soon attain the maturity of perfection. They all acknowledge a God, but they request him to remain afar off, and deprecate his interference with that admirable machinery which they have erected for themselves."

Yes -

*The groans of nature in this nether world,
Which heaven has heard for ages, have an end.
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,
Whose fire was kindled at the prophets lamp;
The time of rest, the promised Sabbath comes.
Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course,
Over a sinful world ; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things,
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest :
For He, whose car the winds are, and the clouds,
The dust that waits upon his sultry march,
When sin hath moved Him, and His wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend
Propitious in His chariot paved with love;
And what His storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.*

Cowper

Outline of Coming Events

Let me, however, recall your minds to my original position. Cast down, if you will, all the bulwarks I have erected: but I defy the stoutest champion among you to make a breach in the strong wall itself. I rest my whole defence on Zechariah 14; remember this, or else you will please yourselves by breaking off a few fragments from the buttresses, and then boasting that you have stormed the citadel.

I think it not unlikely, however, that there are some in this vast assembly, who, though they can say nothing in reply to these arguments, will yet persist in their old views. If so, the words of Butler are precisely applicable to them -

*“He that complies against his will,
Is of the same opinion still”*

Mark that, against his will, not his judgment, which is the real secret of the rejection of all demonstrated truth.

I am now prepared to give you an outline of the order of coming events, and this I do as a help to your study of the whole subject, which, as Peter Sterry, one of Cromwell’s censors, beautifully remarks, *“is of a transcendent glory in itself, of universal importance to all persons and states, and very seasonable for the present times. Like a piece of rich coin, which hath been long buried in the earth, and lately dug up again, it begins to grow bright with handling, and to pass current with great numbers of saints, and learned men of great authority. As the same star, at different seasons, is the evening star, setting immediately after the sun, and then the morning star shining immediately before it; so was this truth the evening star to the first coming of Christ, setting together with the glory of that day in a night of anti-christianism; and now appears again in our times as a morning star to that blessed day of the second effusion of the spirit, and the second appearance of our Saviour in the glory of the Father.”* His fellow-censor, Joseph Caryl, was of the same opinion; hear him; *“That all the saints shall reign with Christ a thousand years on earth, both in a visible and spiritual glorious manner, before the time of the ultimate and general resurrection, is a position which, though not a few have hesitated about and opposed it, has gained ground in the hearts and judgments of very many both grave and godly men”*.

But to proceed: - In Christendom - I refer especially to the old world, and most especially to that part of it which constituted the ancient Roman empire - in Christendom, as far as godliness is concerned, the nations will grow worse and

worse (*2Tim 3:1-6*) - for the highest point of civilization is compatible with the lowest point of godliness - till, as a judicial punishment, they are subjected to the yoke of Antichrist (*2Thess 2:11-12*) who, towards the close of his brief but brilliant career, shall conduct them to the Holy Land, there to besiege Jerusalem (*Zech 14:1, Rev 16:16*), which, at that time, shall have been renovated and re-peopled by its ancient inhabitants . At some period prior to this, the Lord Jesus shall descend from *“the third heavens”* to the firmament of this world, and *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,”* shall raise those who have died in Him, change the living saints from mortal to immortal, and in one glorious company, lift them up to meet him in the air (*1Cor 15:52, 1Thess 4:14-17*). In the deep distress of the restored Jews, they shall cry to God for deliverance (*Dan 12:1, Jer 30:7-9*), when suddenly, to their amazement, Jesus, the true Messiah, with all His saints, shall be revealed to their weeping eyes (*Zech 9:10-14*). At the same time the Antichrist, with his countless hosts, like his predecessor Sennacherib, shall miraculously perish (*Zech 14:3, 12, Rev 19:19-21*) whilst the territories of the fourth - or Roman empire - or, at least, its western division, shall be destroyed by earthquake, brimstone, and fire, like Sodom and the cities of the plain. (*Dan 7:11, compared with 2Pet 3:10, Rev 18:8, 18*).

The pardoned and converted Jews shall be the heralds to the benighted heathen of the advent of their great King (*Isa 66:19*). The Spirit shall be poured out in superabundance from on high; Satan and his angels shall be arrested and imprisoned in the abyss (*Rev 20:1-3*). All nations shall be converted (*Isa 2:2-4*). The New Jerusalem shall descend from heaven, and from this God-built city (*Heb 11:10*), the King of kings, the Lord Jesus, and his fellow-kings, the glorified saints - namely, those who have suffered with him during His absence (*Rom 8:17*), shall administer the affairs of a redeemed and renewed earth (*Rev 21:24*)

In anticipation of this glorious era, the *46th Psalm* was indicted, which, together with all the texts above referred to, I beg you to peruse.

*O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true!
Scenes of accomplished bliss! Which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refresh'd with foretaste of the joy?
One song employs all nations, and all cry
“Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us!”
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountaintops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy;*

*Till nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round.
Behold the measure of the promise filled:
See Salem built, the labour of a God!*

*Bright as a sun the sacred city shines.
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her; unbounded is her joy;
Praise is in all her gates: upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
Kneels with the natives of the farthest West;
And Ethiopia spreads abroad her hand,
And worships. Her report has travell'd forth
Into all lands. From every chine they come
To see thy beauty and to share thy joy,
O Zion! An assembly such as earth
Saw never; such as heaven stoops down to see!*

Cowper

*The animals as once in Eden, live
In peace. The wolf dwells with the lamb; the bear
And leopard with the ox. With looks of love
The tiger and the scaly crocodile
Together meet, at Gambia's palmy wave;
The little child leaps from his mother's arm
And strokes the crested snake, and rolls unhurt
Among his speckled waves...
And sauntering school boys, slow returning, play
At eve, about the lion's den, and weave
Into his shaggy mane fantastic flowers.
The desert blossoms, and the barren sings.
Justice and mercy, holiness and love
Among the people walk; Messiah reigns
And earth keeps jubilee a thousand years.*

These last beautiful lines are from Pollok's "Course of Time," Book 5 and it seems that he, though not a Millenarian, is obliged to interpret *Isaiah 11:6-9*, literally; why not *Zechariah 14* as well?

Who, after reading these exquisite verses, will not exclaim with the seraphic Milton -

Come forth out of thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth; put on the visible robe of thy Imperial Majesty; take up that unlimited sceptre which thy Almighty father hath bequeathed Thee; for now the voice of thy Bride calls Thee; and all creation sighs to be renewed.

*Come, then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, - the crown of all the earth,-
Thou who alone art worthy.*

*The very spirit of the world is tired
Of its own taunting question, - asked so long, -
"Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?"
Come, then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of the world.*

Cowper

"Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, Come Lord Jesus."

Quotes from Others

As far as the Word of God is concerned, I have now accomplished my task, and -
If you can better these principles, tell me, if not, join me in following them.

But as there may be some present who would like to hear the word of man on the same subject, I shall read a few extracts from several of the best authors of different denominations. For Churchmen I shall read Bishop Newton, reminding them, however, that he is not alone in their body. With him are the learned Mede, Bishops Horsley and Van Mildert, Clayton and Newcome. With them are Toplady, Bickersteth, McNeile, Melville, Elliott, Brooks, Birks, and a thousand more of their brightest ornaments. Among the laity are Sir I. Newton, the Duke of Manchester, Frere, Habershon, Granville Penn. Let us hear, then, the Bishop:

“The doctrine of the millennium was generally believed in the three first and purest ages; and this belief, as the learned Dodwell hath justly observed, was one principal cause of the fortitude of the primitive Christians; they even coveted martyrdom in hopes of being partners of the privileges and glories of the martyrs in the first resurrection. Afterwards this doctrine grew into disrepute for various reasons. Some, both Jewish and Christian writers, have debased it with a mixture of fables; they have described the kingdom more like a sensual than a spiritual kingdom, and thereby they have not only exposed themselves, but (what is infinitely worse) the doctrine itself to ridicule and contempt. It hath suffered by the misrepresentations of its enemies, as well as by the indiscretions of its friends; many, like Jerome, have charged the Millenarians with absurd and impious opinions which they never held; and rather than admit the truth of the doctrine, they have not scrupled to call in question the genuineness of the book of the Revelation. It hath been abused even to worse purposes; it hath been made an engine of faction; and turbulent fanatics, under the pretence of saints, have aspired to dominion, and disturbed the peace of civil society. Besides, wherever the influence and authority of the Church of Rome have extended, she hath endeavoured by all means to discredit this doctrine; and, indeed, not without sufficient reason, this kingdom of Christ being founded on the ruins of the kingdom of Antichrist. No wonder, therefore, that this doctrine lay depressed for many ages; but it sprang up again, at the Reformation, and will flourish together with the study of the Revelation.”

For the Baptists I shall read good old Dr. Gill, who, when he was made a DD, declared *“that he neither sought it, nor thought it, nor bought it”* nor is he alone in their body. With him were nearly all the Baptists at the close of the

seventeenth, and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, as is evident from their creed given in Crosby's history; *'O quam mutati ab illis'* [o what a change from the former]. With him, too, are some of their best existing pastors; especially Octavius Winslow of Leamington, and John Cox, of Woolwich.

"Christ will be in his kingdom, not only by his Spirit and the effusions of his grace, but he will personally appear in all his glory - hence his appearing and kingdom are put together as contemporary in 2Timothy 4:1. This glorious and visible kingdom of Christ will not take place till after the resurrection of the just, and the renovation of the world. As soon as he personally appears, the dead in Christ will rise first - this is the first resurrection, in which they who have a part, shall reign with Christ a thousand years. This kingdom of Christ will be bounded by two resurrections: by the first resurrection, or the resurrection of the just, at which it will begin; and by the second resurrection, or the resurrection of the wicked, at which it will end. In the interval between these two resurrections will be the millennium, or thousand year reign of Christ and his people together."

For the Presbyterians I shall read the immortal Chalmers. As far back as 1836 he wrote thus to Mr. Bickersteth:

"Of this, in general, I am well satisfied, that the next coming (whether in person or not I dare not say) will be a coming, not to final judgment, but to precede and to usher in the millennium. I utterly despair of the universal prevalence of Christianity as the result of a pacific missionary process...I look for its conclusive establishment through a widening passage of desolating judgments with the utter demolition of our present civil and ecclesiastical structures."

So thought Milton:

*Truth shall retire
Bestruck with slanderous darts, and works of faith
Rarely be found: So shall the world go on,
To good malignant, to bad men benign;
Under her own weight groaning; till the day
Appear of Respiration (Acts 3:19) to the just,
And vengeance to the wicked (When?), at return
Of Him...
In glory of the Father, to dissolve
Satan with his perverted world; then raise
From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,
New Heavens, new earth, ages of endless date.*

Paradise Lost, Book 12.

But *“towards the close of his days,”* says a writer in the Quarterly Journal of Prophecy, to which admirable publication I am indebted for several of these extracts, *“and in the mellowed ripeness of a matured judgment,”* we find him [Chalmers] writing far more decidedly on the point.

“There has been no appearance yet from Zion,” says he, commenting on the remarkable language of the 50th Psalm, *“at all corresponding with that made from Mount Sinai. And I am far more inclined to the literal interpretation of this Psalm than that which would restrict it to the mere preaching of the gospel in the days of the Apostles. It looks far more like the descent of the Son of Man on the Mount of Olives with all the accompaniments of a Jewish conversion, and a first resurrection; and a destruction of the assembled host of Antichrist. The saints here summoned are those within the pale of the everlasting covenant, ratified by the blood of the sacrifice of Christ. The address here given is like that from the Son of God, now manifested to the Jews who had returned, though yet unconverted, to the Holy Land ; but who, now hearing the words, as well as seeing the person, of Him whom they had pierced, are born in a day by the impressive remonstrance and overpowering spectacle.”*

Again, on Isaiah 24 he writes, *“In this prophecy is foreshown a visitation upon the earth still future, which is to emerge in the millennium - how emphatically told in this place! - when the Lord shall reign in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously.”* And on Isaiah 25, *“In Mount Zion, now the metropolis of the Christian world, shall there be a great spiritual feast for all people.”* And on verse 8, *“Can this be, that in the millennium there will be no death? Surely, they who partake in the first resurrection, will not die over again.”* And on Isaiah 52, *“It is quite obvious of this prophecy, that it expands beyond the dimensions of its typical event, and that it relates, not to a past but to a future, and final deliverance of the Jews...their ‘seeing eye to eye,’ makes for the personal reign of Him whose feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives.”*

And to give just another quotation, he writes on Psalm 68, *“There is every likelihood of allusions here to the great contest of the book of Revelation...But God has in reserve for his people still another restoration: He will bring them again, as of old, from Bashan and the Red Sea to their own land. His people shall ‘see him whom they have pierced,’ perhaps when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and Jerusalem will again become the great central sanctuary, by becoming the metropolis of the Christian world.”*

Nor is Chalmers alone in their body. With him are Dr. Cumming, the Messrs. Bonar of Kelso, and Collace, M'Donald of Blairgowrie, the literary Gilfillan, Wood of Ely, and the devoted missionary, Hewitson, who, in a letter, written December 15, 1842, declares, *"I am fully convinced of the nearness of the time when the Lord shall come with his saints, and reign over the earth. This conclusion I have reached after having been long bound down by prejudice and inattention to God's prophetic Word, under the yoke of what I now see to be unscriptural and ill-founded opinions"*.

For the Independents, I quote the celebrated Dr. Samuel Clark, the intimate friend of Watts and Doddridge. In the Appendix, Section 20 of his well-known Scripture Promises there is the following title: "Promises relative to the personal reign of Christ with His risen saints over the earth - Zech 14:1-9.

With him was the poet Milton, among the laity, and it is an undoubted fact, that some of their best divines in the Westminster Assembly were Millenarians. Principal Baillie, in his Letters and Journals, vol2, p. 313, thus writes; *"The most of the chief divines here, not only Independents, but others, such as Twisse, Marshall, Palmer, and many more are express Chiliasts."*

And Baxter, with a little more modesty than certain theologians of modern times, whose learning and piety would require to be multiplied a hundred-fold ere they would equal his - that "prince of pastors" - thus cautiously speaks on the subject:

"Though I have not skill enough in the exposition of hard prophecies, to make a particular determination about the thousand years' reign of Christ on the earth, before the final judgment, yet I may say that I cannot confute what such learned men as Mr. Mede, Dr. Twisse, and others (after the old fathers), have hereof asserted."

Let the Methodists next step forward and hear their own Hymn Book, bearing in mind that Fletcher of Madeley, the attached friend of Wesley, was a thorough Millenarian.

Hymn 62

*What happiness, O Lord, have we
By mercy gathered into Thee
Before the flood descend:
And while the bursting clouds come down,
We mark the vengeful day begun,
And calmly wait the end.*

*Thy tokens we with joy confess;
The war proclaims the Prince of Peace;
The earthquake speaks Thy power;
The famine all Thy fullness brings;
The plague presents Thy healing wings,
And nature's final hour*

*Whatever ills the world befall,
A pledge of endless good we call;
A sign of Jesus near;
His chariot will not long delay;
We hear the rumbling wheels, and pray
Triumphant Lord appear!*

*Appear with cloud's on Zion's hill,
Thy word and mystery to fulfil,
Thy chosen to approve,
Thy members on Thy throne to place,
And stamp Thy name on every face,
In glorious, heavenly love!*

Who can doubt that the author of these hymns believed in the premillennial advent of the Lord? I presume, from their style, compared with the following verses, that their composer was Charles Wesley; if so it is impossible to deny, as I shall prove, that they are intended to teach the Personal Reign. At any rate it is plain that modern Methodists do not believe that *"Whatever ills the world befall,"* are *"a pledge of endless good"* to the saints - *"a sign of Jesus near"* nor that - *"nature shall he suddenly restored."* Nor do they wish that Christ would *"appear with clouds on Zion's hill, His members on his throne to place."*

I have myself been excluded from a Methodist pulpit, for preaching the Personal Reign, that is, for preaching what Methodists sing. In like manner my testimonials were refused for preaching in the pulpit what I read in the desk, namely, the 17th Article of the Church of England. So the Pharisees persecuted Christ for preaching their own creed in Moses and the prophets (*John 5:45-47*). The world asks "what's in a name?" I ask "what's in a creed?"

But let us see Charles Wesley's own interpretation in a volume of poems;

*That place where once I walked below,
On Olivet I will appear;
My bleeding feet to Israel show,
While those who pierced behold me near.*

*Again I will forsake my throne,
And to my footstool earth descend,
And fill the earth with peace unknown
With glorious joy that ne'er shall end*

*We know it must be done,
For God hath spoke the word,
All Israel shall their Saviour own,
To their first state restored.*

*Rebuilt by His command,
Jerusalem shall rise;
Her temple on Moriah stand
Again, and touch the skies.*

*Father, now to Israel raise
Thy servant and thy son,'
Christ, our heavenly David, place
On His terrestrial throne.*

*Trusting in the literal word
We look for Christ on earth again
Come, our everlasting Lord,
With all thy saints to reign.*

*Happy with those that first arrive,
Might I my lot obtain,
When, Christ descending from the skies,
Begins His glorious reign.*

*Come, my Jehovah, come,
With all Thy saints appear;
Antichrist expects his doom,
And we Thy kingdom here.*

*Quick as the darted lightning flies,
Flashing at once throughout the skies,
Saviour Thou wilt on earth appear,
To 'stablish Thy dominion here.*

*Before the final general doom,
We know Thou wilt to judgment come;
Thy foes destroy, Thy friends maintain,
And glorious with Thy ancients reign.*

*Come then, our Heavenly Friend,
Sorrow and death to end;
Pure millennial joy to give,
Now appear on earth again;
Now Thy people saved receive,
Now reign Thy glorious reign.*

For all denominations I shall quote a hymn which, I believe, is sung by every sect, without exception; I mean the well-known verse -

Lo he comes with clouds descending

(Is that personal or spiritual? See Rev 1:7)

*Thousand, thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of his train.*

(*The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee.* But why come?)

God appears on earth to reign.

See *Dan 7:13-14*. If this does not teach the Personal Reign I don't know what can. Certainly those who deny it ought to expunge the offending words from their Hymn Books.

I shall not quote from any foreign authors; but will just observe that the celebrated German theologians, Krummacher and Olshausen, are Millenarians.

One more quotation, from the man of all parties, the renowned John Bunyan;

"None ever saw this world as it was in its first creation, but only Adam and his wife ; neither shall any ever see it until the manifestation of the children of God, that is, till the redemption or resurrection of the saints...Adam, therefore, as a type of Christ, reigned...almost a thousand years. The world, therefore, beginning thus, doth show how it will end, namely, by the reign of the second Adam, as it began with the reign of the first. These long-lived men, therefore, shew us the glory that the church shall have in the latter day, even in the seventh thousand year of the world, that Sabbath when Christ shall set up his kingdom upon earth. According to that which is written, 'they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.'"

Practical Reflections

I cannot conclude this lecture without a few practical reflections. That the present days are, in some sense, the last, is admitted by nearly all Christians, however various their views of the succeeding state of things. All are looking for a crisis - which even the world expects - to be immediately followed by a lengthened era of bliss. The last seven years have been unparalleled for a quick succession of stirring events; while the general spirit of the age is in striking accordance with the predicted character of men at the close of the dispensation (*2Timothy 3:1-5*)

The ecclesiastical and civil convulsions of this period, answering to the foretold shaking of heaven and earth, prior to the appearance of the desire of all nations (*Haggai 2:6-7*), the disruption of the Church of Scotland, and of the vast community of Methodists, the incurable schism of the Church of England, the deep discontent and disorder of the minor sects, the sudden and wide-spread revolutions of the Continent, the violent commotion of the masses, the destructive famines and pestilences, earthquakes, fires, floods, and storms, the great commercial panic a few years since, the "*wars and rumours of wars,*" analogous to the signs preceding the close of the last dispensation. The very cry itself; "*there's a good time coming*", the gathering of the nations to the Crystal Palace, in the vain hope of cementing concord, followed immediately by the bloody massacre and revolution of Paris, the dread of invasion in England, and the enrolling of the militia, as if in mockery of the shout of "Peace", the universal spirit of insubordination and disrespect, reaching even to little children, the sudden removal of the two greatest men in the world - Peel the greatest statesman, and Wellington the greatest warrior - whose combined efforts, by Catholic Emancipation, took away the chief obstacle to the present and last rise of Popery, the appalling lukewarmness of the great bulk of professing Christians, their strange hostility to the soul-quickening doctrine of the Personal Reign, the fresh yearnings of the Jews for their fatherland, the waning of the Turkish Crescent, the waxing of the Russian Bear, the rising prosperity of Egypt (*Daniel 11:40*), the thirty-seven years peace, during which the gospel has been diffused both at home and abroad to an unexampled extent, as a witness to all nations, before the end comes, and to gather out a remnant previous to the closing scene, the increasing light on prophecy, the near approach of the seventh millennium of the world, the great Sabbatic rest, after 6,000 years of toil - commencing, according to the learned Mr. Clinton and others, at about 1862; the equal duration of "*the times of the Gentiles*" and the

Jews (*Luke 21:25*) and last, though not least, the uplifted cry, ever widening and deepening as it goes, *"Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him"* - all conspire to warn us that we are in the last days, and, as a cluster of bright stars, gathering to one spot, and forming one brilliant constellation, point, like the star of Bethlehem, though with intenser light, to the advent of the Son of Man.

But let me remind you that, as you may be carnally interested in mere doctrinal discussions, so you may be in prophetic. As you may be unprofitably excited on the questions of Election and Free Will - Protestantism and Popery - so you may be on the questions of the coming millennium. Take heed, therefore, lest you be thus deceived, and pray daily that you may be solemnized and sanctified by the consideration of these momentous truths; for if, indeed, it be probable, that we are approaching the close of the dispensation, if it be likely that most of us will live to see the coming of the Son of Man, *"what manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness"*. How disengaged from the present evil world - how free from covetousness and self-indulgence, and how careful *"to be found in Christ without spot and blameless"*.

And here I would notice, that the signs of the last days are not like one protracted and tremendous tempest - destroying all in its fell sweep, and leaving no time either to take breath or to reflect; but rather, like a succession of separate storms, with intervals of calm and sunshine between. And it is in these intervals, that men forget the past, ignore the future, and are wholly absorbed in the present. Like Pharaoh, when the rod is lifted up, they are at their old work again, *"planting and building, eating and drinking,"* and living for this world alone. Each stirring event, as it comes, drives its predecessor from the memory. The pestilence obliterates the famine - the commercial panic, the pestilence - the Crystal Palace, the commercial panic - the French Revolution, the Crystal Palace; and now, most ominous of all - the Russian war, the Crystal Palace.

But, when a man enlightened by God, takes a large and comprehensive view of the past, the present, and the future, he beholds a long series of events, though separated by intervals of various width, and sees in them the predicted tokens of the great crisis at hand. Others have fallen to sleep in the transient sunshine; but he has kept awake, in calm and in storm alike, and is prepared for the final issue.

“With regard to our present position,” says Mr Elliott, “we have been led, as the result of our investigations, to fix it at but a short time from the end of the now existing dispensation, and the expected second advent of Christ. This thought, when we seriously attempt to realise it, must be felt to be a very startling as well as solemn one. And for my own part, I confess to risings of doubt, and almost of scepticism, as I do so. Can it be that we have come so near to the day of the Son of Man, that the generation now alive shall very possibly not have passed away before its fulfilment; yea, that perhaps even our own eyes may witness, without the intervention of death, that astonishing event of the consummation? The idea falls on my mind as almost incredible”.

And, as for you, whose consciences tell you that you had rather meet the devil, than the King of kings, in his glory; with what profound anxiety should you seek the one thing needful. If the life-boat shall only take another trip or two between the shore and the sinking barque - how deep should be your anguish lest you should not escape. As yet the door of the ark is open, as yet you may enter in. But, Oh! press on, lest the flood suddenly rise, and find you shut out - *“for the night is far spent, the day is at hand.”* Repent of the past; with Peter weep bitterly over your former sins, and with him lay your hand on your heart, exclaiming *“Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.”*

I am well aware, both from Scripture and experience, that in spite of overwhelming evidence some will still mock, and thus fulfil the very prophecies they deride - for it is written, *“there shall come scoffers in the last days, saying ‘where is the promise of his coming?’”* I speak not to them, but to *“those who have ears to hear.”* Don’t be deceived; there will always be room to doubt, that the watchful may examine and be safe, and that the careless may stumble and fall, as it is written in the twelfth chapter of Daniel - *“The wicked shall not understand, but the wise shall”* (Hosea 14:9) The world’s sages will still, by their diabolical alchemy, transmute omens of disaster into tokens of peace; they will still condemn the truth without a hearing, and call students of prophecy fools, whilst they dare themselves to be prophets. What is it but prophesying to say *“there’s a good time coming,”* and if those may prophesy of good, who never search the Bible, why may not those prophesy of evil, who make it their sole guide? Surely one prophet of the Lord, who confides in the inspired Word, is better than forty prophets of Baal, who trust in their own dreams.

In conclusion, let neither the world nor the church be your guide in this matter - I say nor the church; for, on prophecy, the world has converted the church - the one sings *“there’s a good time coming,”* the other re-echoes the delusive cant.

And you may be quite sure, that when these two parties agree as to their mutual prospects, they are each in the wrong - the blind has led the blind, and, consequently, both have stumbled into the ditch. As true Protestants, take the prophetic word alone for your guide, and interpret the future by the same key with which you have interpreted the past. Judge for yourselves; and though it is true that -

*To follow foolish precedents, and wink
With both your eyes, is easier than to think;
Yet do not be the slaves of 'a-la-mode', [in fashion]
With packhorse constancy to keep the road,
Crooked or straight, through quags or thorny dells,
True to the jingling of your leader's bells.*

To the genuine heaven-born saints, I say, rejoice, for the time is at hand - *"Lift up your drooping heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."*

*Earth, what a terror lies before Thee,
None like it in the shadowy past;
The sharpest thorn that ever tore thee,
Even though the briefest and the last*

*Behold the fair moon veil her lustre;
Behold the sackcloth of the sun!
The shrouding of each starry cluster, -
The threefold war of earth begun*

*Behold the shadows of its sunset,
And wrapt in these the Avenger's form;
Behold the Armageddon onset; -
But saints shalt be above the storm*

*There comes the moaning and the sighing,
There comes the hot tear's heavy fall;
The thousand agonies of dying; -
But saints shall be above them all.*

This lecture, given by A A Rees in 1853, caused quite a stir in Sunderland. With a gathering of two thousand people, Rees attempted to prove the literal and personal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years at the end of this age.

Having accomplished what he set out to do, many requested a publication of his lecture. 1,500 copies were printed and distributed, however, this did not meet the demand and a second edition was published.

Rees was the founder and pastor of Bethesda Free Church, Sunderland, from 1845-1884.



Bethesda Classics

www.bethesdafreechurch.org