

# The Great Prophetic Question: Is the Millennium, or Christ's Advent, to be expected first?

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*Paper 9 of 20 'Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects'.*

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This is, in truth, the Great Prophetic Question. All other questions as to prophetic interpretation may be regarded as subordinate to this one. Nearly all serious christian people are agreed in expecting a long period of universal peace and blessedness on earth — a period which, from its being stated in Rev. 20, to be of a thousand years' continuance, has come to be popularly termed the Millennium. All Christians expect, moreover, a second coming of Christ — a real, personal return, as Judge, of that blessed One, whose first coming was not to judge, but to save. But when does this second coming of Christ take place? Does He come to introduce the Millennium? or does the Millennium first take place, and Christ come only at its close? This is the great question to which our attention is now to be directed.

It is undeniable that Scripture represents the world's condition at the time of the second advent of our Lord, as one of utter carelessness and security on the one hand, and of great wickedness on the other. I shall quote no scriptures in proof of this, but such as are admitted by all to apply to the actual, personal coming of Christ. "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also is it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17: 26-30.) "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. 5: 3, 4.) "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1: 7, 8.) "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." (2 Peter 3: 3-10.) No one will deny that these passages refer to the actual coming of Christ; and they are but a specimen of the way in which Scripture uniformly speaks of the condition in which the world will be found, when "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" bursts upon it. We are aware of the answer made to this, by our brethren who deny that the advent is premillennial. They endeavour to account for the world being found in such a condition at that day, by the prediction of Rev. 20, that a great defection will take place, and a wide-spread rebellion arise, after the close of the thousand years. We shall not at present discuss this point. We hope to give that passage a full consideration at a

future stage of our inquiries. We only for the present beg the reader to observe what is admitted by those who view the subject in that light. In whatever way they may account for it, they admit, first, that wickedness and carelessness will characterize the world when Christ comes. Secondly, that the Scripture account of the world's condition at that epoch would not apply to its condition during the Millennium, when "the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth, as the waters cover the sea." Now what we have to do is to prove from Scripture *that no such period as this intervenes*. It is admitted, as matter of fact, that the world was wicked when the New Testament was written. It is admitted, as undeniably predicted in God's word, that the world will be wicked when Christ comes. We shall prove to you, dear readers, that according to the prophetic teaching of the New Testament, *this will be the condition of the world from apostolic times till the coming of the Lord*.

The first proof we adduce is our Lord's parable, in Luke 19: 11-27. The occasion of its being spoken is thus explained to us: "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Now, without going into any lengthened disquisition on the phrase "kingdom of God," we may safely assume that it is here used to express the people's expectation of Messiah's reign — "the kingdom" which "the God of heaven" was to set up, according to Dan. 2: 44 — and that whenever a period shall arrive characterized by universal righteousness and peace, then the kingdom of God will surely have appeared. There were those who thought it was about to appear immediately, when Christ was making His last entry into Jerusalem. The parable before us was spoken to correct this mistake. It begins as follows: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." No one can question that the nobleman represents Christ Himself. And can there be any doubt as to the kingdom which Christ has gone into heaven — the far country — to receive? Can it be any other than that of which Daniel speaks? "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. 7: 13, 14.) But not only had the nobleman to go into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom; *he had to return ere the kingdom could appear*. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom AND TO RETURN." It is thus as though the Saviour had said, "You are expecting that the kingdom of God, the long-looked-for reign of Messiah, shall immediately take place. But I have to leave this world, and go into heaven, there to be invested with universal dominion, and I have then to return to this earth, ere the kingdom you are expecting can appear." But this is not the whole of the parable. The nobleman is represented as entrusting ten pounds to his ten servants; that is, a pound to each, during his absence. He says to them, "Occupy till I come." We have their conduct in this stewardship delineated, and also the conduct of the enemies of the nobleman, his citizens, throughout the period of his absence. We have the several issues of their conduct also, when he does return. But not a word throughout the parable of anything like the subjugation of his foes, or the establishment of his kingdom, till after his return. "His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." Be it remembered that our anti-millenarian brethren admit that this parable spans the whole period from the first to the second advent of Christ. The words, "Occupy till I come," are referred, and must, without obvious violence to the meaning of the text, be referred to the second, personal

coming of Christ. At the close of the Millennium we are sure that instead of *receiving for Himself* a kingdom, He will *deliver up* the kingdom to God, even the Father, which He shall have previously received, and over which He shall have reigned. But here, it is on His receiving the kingdom that He returns; "And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom." The parable thus affords a two-fold proof that it is at the commencement, not at the close, of the Millennium, that Christ's second advent takes place. First, the parable connects the return of the nobleman with his having received the kingdom: secondly, the whole period of his absence is characterized by the varying conduct of his several servants, in respect to the charge entrusted to them, and the continued enmity of his citizens, who are represented throughout as sending after him the haughty and insulting message, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It is his coming that abases their pride, and brings upon them the destruction which their rebellion has deserved. It is his coining that brings to each servant the suited recompense of his conduct in the stewardship confided to him. The Millennium itself is the kingdom, which appears not till these things have come to pass.

Our Lord's discourses in Matt. 13 constitute the second proof of our position, that no Millennium of blessedness intervenes between the first and second advent of Christ. A full exposition of the chapter we would not here attempt. We must be satisfied to glance at the more prominent points, as they bear on the question before us. The chapter contains seven parables, spoken by our Lord Himself, to illustrate "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." There was to be a kingdom, even while the king was rejected — while the nobleman was in the far country. But it was to be *a kingdom in mystery*; and the solution to the disciples of this mystery, or rather of these mysteries, of the kingdom of heaven, is the object of our Lord in these parables. When "the nobleman" has "returned from the far country, having received the kingdom, there will be no further mystery; the kingdom will "appear," will be manifested then. But now that he is absent, these "mysteries of the kingdom" have their existence. What are they? Let us glance at the reply which the chapter affords.

It is with the well-known parable of the sower going forth to sow that the chapter opens. Does it sanction the thought of any universal harvest from the seed sown? Alas! it is but a small proportion indeed that brings forth fruit; and even where the seed is not entirely lost, the increase is varied — in some thirty, in some sixty, and only in some an hundred-fold. As for the remainder, the fowls devour it, or the thorns choke it, or for want of nourishment, by reason of the rock that underlies the surface, the sun scorches and withers it. Is there any intimation here of the arrival of a period marked by the "universal diffusion of revealed truth, the universal reception of the true religion, and unlimited subjection to the sceptre of Christ?"\* Can this opening parable of Matt. 13 be in any sense descriptive of a period so characterized? But on proceeding to the next parable, that of the tares and wheat, we shall find the case stronger still. Here Satan himself becomes a sower, and tares are found mingled with the wheat, which had actually sprung up, and given promise of an approaching harvest. We are not left to discover the interpretation of this parable for ourselves: the Lord interprets it for us. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man: the field is the world: (*kosmos*) the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: the enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world; (*aión*, age;) and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. (*aión*, age.) The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things

that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Such is the divine explanation of this parable of the wheat and tares. Reviewing the parable itself in the light of this authoritative interpretation of it, we beg our readers to observe that the tares are not mere wicked men, as they are born into the world, and grow up in it in their unconverted state. It is a total mistake to suppose that all mankind, save God's children, are tares. The tares represent a distinct class of wicked men, *covertly introduced by Satan amongst God's people*, just as the tares were secretly sown by an enemy where the good man had sown good seed. They are those agents and children of the wicked one, by the admixture of whom with the children of the kingdom Satan has succeeded in corrupting Christianity itself. And where it is said, "Let both grow together till the harvest," it is not simply that unconverted men are to continue on the earth till then, but that this fearful work of Satan, by which he has succeeded in corrupting Christianity itself, is of such a character that it cannot be undone, its effects cannot be neutralized, till, at the end of the age, the Son of man sends forth His angels to "gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." The chapter, as far as we have now considered it, discloses two fearful characters of power exercised by Satan throughout the era of which the chapter is descriptive. The one is his unbroken power over the hardened, darkened heart, on which, as the seed by the wayside, the word only falls, for "the wicked one to catch away that which was sown." The other is his power (through the unfaithfulness, alas! of those who slept when they ought to have been on the watch) to introduce evil where the Son of man had already wrought good; in other words, to corrupt Christianity. When, then, it is said, "Let both grow together till the harvest," it is the definite prediction, that not only shall Satan hinder the success of the Gospel with those in whose hearts his blinding power has never been interrupted; but also that Christianity, once corrupted, shall, as matter of fact, continue so till the harvest. Now all our readers are aware what the corruption of Christianity has been — how vast a system of consummate fraud and wickedness Satan has succeeded in palming upon mankind under the name of Christ. And is this to remain till Christ comes at the end of the Millennium? What sort of a Millennium would it be? It is in vain for our anti-millenarian brethren to confound things which so widely differ. Could a period marked by "the universal diffusion of revealed truth, the universal reception of the true religion, unlimited subjection to Christ's sceptre, universal peace, much spiritual power and glory, the in-bringing of all Israel, the ascendancy of truth and righteousness in human affairs, and great temporal prosperity," co-exist with the corruption of Christianity represented by the sowing of the tares? Judge whether "the ascendancy of truth and righteousness in human affairs" can have for its illustration, or can co-exist with that which is illustrated by, the incapacity of the servants to undo the mischief which an enemy of their master has wrought! And then, when we remember how soon Satan did sow his tares — how soon he succeeded in corrupting Christianity; when we remember to what this corruption has grown, and how it continues, according to our Lord's prediction, to this day — when we see before our eyes such a matter-of-fact comment on our Lord's words, "Let both grow together" — and remember that this corruption is to continue "till the harvest" — when we bear in mind that the parable thus forbids all thought of the setting aside of this master-piece of Satan's craft and enmity, till judgment shall accomplish what no other agency could effect; how evident that there can be no Millennium until the harvest! And as our brethren allow that it is at the harvest the personal return of the Lord Jesus takes place, how evident that there can be no Millennium till after that event.

\*These words are quoted from, Dr. David Brown, one of the most popular writers of the anti-millenarian school, who gives seven distinctive features of the Millennium as he anticipates it. Besides those above named, he specifies "universal peace, much spiritual power and glory, the in-bringing of all Israel, the ascendancy of truth and righteousness in human affairs, and great temporal prosperity."

If it be said that the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven point to a universal diffusion of the truth, we reply, in the first place, that they cannot contradict other parables, *and interpretations of parables*, in the same chapter. They are not themselves interpreted by our Lord; and to set our thoughts of what they mean against our Lord's explanation of what the others mean, would surely never commend itself to any who reverence God's word. Secondly, we admit, that the rapid and extensive growth of something is represented by the parable of the mustard seed — that the equally wide and silent diffusion of something is represented by that of the leaven: but where is the evidence of universality in either case? Neither parable contains a word to suggest the idea of the whole earth being overshadowed by the mustard tree, or the whole world being morally penetrated by the leaven. With regard, indeed, to the latter, while it does penetrate to every part of the sphere within which it works, the description of that sphere suggests the idea of limitation rather than of universality. An analogous symbol is used to represent a local church, or assembly; (see 1 Cor. 5: 6, 7,) but surely three measures of meal would never be the figure or symbol of the whole world. Thirdly, we have no difficulty in admitting that it is the growth of Christianity, of what man sees and knows as such, that is set forth to us by the growth of the mustard seed to a mighty tree. But let it never be forgotten, that the Christianity which thus grows and spreads is a Christianity which has been, according to the doctrine of the previous parable, already corrupted. And is the Millennium to be introduced by the universal spread of a corrupted Christianity? Is it to be characterized by the universal prevalence of a Christianity thus corrupted? Then, fourthly, one would think that to a spiritual mind, familiar with the phraseology of Scripture, and especially with the language of symbols employed therein, the very figures used in these parables would suggest the idea of corruption. One of them, that of the leaven, is used throughout the word of God as the uniform appointed symbol of corruption. "The leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" — "the leaven of malice and of wickedness" — "the old leaven" — are phrases which must instantly occur to the mind of even a superficial reader of the divine oracles; while the warning, that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and the exhortation, "Purge out the old leaven," would scarcely awaken in the soul thoughts in anywise kindred to that of the universal spread of the Gospel. And, be it remembered, that when the apostle enjoins the removal of the old leaven, he does not bid us put in the new. His words are, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are UNLEAVENED." (1 Cor. 5: 7.) And should it be said that in some of the sacrifices under the law, leaven was ordained to be used, and that the prophet Amos says, "Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven," (Amos 4: 5) the answer is, that all this confirms instead of contradicting our position. Where Christ, and His perfect work, were set forth by an offering, as in the passover, leaven was most strictly forbidden. Where the participation with Christ of the imperfect human worshipper, to whom evil (however unwillingly) adheres, is what a given offering typifies, there, AS THE SYMBOL OF THIS EVIL, was the leaven to be used. Such were the sacrifices of peace offerings, and the offerings of thanksgiving referred to by the prophet Amos. No leaven was to be burnt on God's altar. Indeed it may be safely affirmed, that if in Matt. 13 the word leaven is to be understood, as many insist that it should be, of the Gospel, it

is the only instance in Scripture in which it is used to symbolize anything but evil. Passing strange, if that which is the unvarying symbol of evil throughout all other parts of God's word, should be here employed by our blessed Lord to set forth the Gospel of His grace, and its universal spread!

With regard to the parable of the mustard seed, it is true that the figure of the growth of a mighty tree would not of itself suggest the idea of corruption; but it is not simply this that constitutes the figure in this parable. It is the growth of a great tree from that which is the smallest of all seeds: and it is the circumstance of its branches affording shelter to "the fowls of the air," — another figure very significantly employed in a former parable in this same chapter. The force and bearing of both these points will soon be evident.

"The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" are the subject of this chapter; and the four parables at which we have glanced unfold to us the following strange, mysterious features of this kingdom, which only has its existence in this mysterious state during the absence of "the nobleman" — the rightful king — in the "far country" to which he has gone.

1. There is the "mystery" that the same seed, scattered by the same hands, should produce such varying results; as well as that seed so good, and sown by one no less than the "Son of man," should in so small a proportion of cases bring forth fruit to perfection. This is surely mysterious; and the part played in this by the enemy — "the fowls" — is to devour the seed which falls by the way side.

2. We have the "mystery" of its being permitted that tares should be sown among the good seed, and of their growing together till the harvest. The part of the enemy in this is to sow the tares.

3. There is the "mystery" of that which when sown is "the smallest of all seeds" becoming a tree: in other words, of Christianity, which in its origin was little and despised among men, becoming great and glorious in the earth. What greater mystery could there be, than that the religion which commenced by the death of Christ as a malefactor, should come to be associated, and invested, with all the dignity, and wealth, and power, and magnificence of this world? How could there be a greater mystery, we ask, unless it be this, that by means of this marvellous change, "the fowls," whose first work was to devour the seed ere it took root, should find shelter in the branches of the tree which commenced by the sowing of the seed? Satan's first work, was to prevent the spread of true Christianity by catching away the seed. His second, was to corrupt Christianity by sowing tares. His third, to use the Christianity thus corrupted, as a more effective engine for the accomplishment of his designs, than any he had before possessed.

4. We have the mystery of all this work of Satan being effected by a process as silent and unperceived as that of the working of leaven in three measures of meal. Surely there is nothing in all this to awaken, but everything to forbid and preclude, the expectation of a Millennium before the coming of Christ.

Ere proceeding to another and distinct branch of evidence, we would consider a little further the subject of "the harvest," examining it in the light of several other Scriptures in which

the same figure is employed. The Lord says that "the harvest is the end of the world;\*" it is admitted, that the advent of Christ takes place at "the harvest." Some indeed contend that the Millennium is included in the age which precedes the harvest; but we have seen how the chapter before us, if seriously examined and impartially weighed, makes this completely incredible. "The harvest" is what terminates this present mysterious state of things, in which wheat and tares grow together, in which the leaven is permitted insidiously to work, and in which the gigantic tree, springing from the least of seeds, affords lodging and sustenance to the fowls of the air. "The harvest" brings all this to an end. But there are other passages in which this figure of "the harvest" is employed. Let us turn to them, and see whether they identify this epoch with the commencement, or with the close, of the Millennium. In Joel 3 we read, "Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe;" and in Rev. 14, "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." Have we anything in the context of these passages to indicate the epoch at which they will receive their fulfilment? We have. We shall find distinct proof, in each case, of its being connected both with the Lord's coming, and with the introduction of the Millennium. In Joel, it stands associated with the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem, and with the gathering of all nations into the valley of Jehoshaphat; "for there," says the Lord, "will I sit to judge all the heathen round about." "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." Thus we find many of the most remarkable signs and circumstances of the Lord's second advent, associated in this passage with "the harvest" of which it speaks. But is it not at the end of time — at the epoch of the judgment of the great white throne? By no means. The Lord himself says, it is "in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem;" and that which succeeds this majestic prediction of "the harvest," is the prediction of the Lord dwelling in Zion, of Jerusalem being holy, and strangers passing through her no more, of the mountains dropping new wine, and the hills flowing with milk — in a word, of the Millennium. "The harvest" terminates the present, and introduces the Millennial age.

\*"The harvest is the end *tou aionos*," the end of the age. This is a different word from *kosmos* or world, where it is said "the field is the world." The latter denotes the actual world, as in such phrases as "the foundation of the world;" the former has reference to duration, and means "world" just in the sense in which "the age" is "the world" morally considered.

As to Revelation 14, compare the verses quoted with Rev. 19: 15, and Rev. 20: 1-6, and you will find "the harvest" connected both with the coming of Christ, and the commencement of the Millennium.

Will the reader now return to Matthew 24 and 25? Our object is to prove from these passages that there will and can be no Millennium prior to the coming of the Lord. The proof afforded by these chapters is this, that they manifestly fill up the whole interval between Christ's

departure and His return, with events of such a character as show it to be an impossibility for the Millennium to intervene. One feature of millennial blessedness is admitted to be, "the in-bringing of all Israel." Now these chapters, stretching from the time at which our Lord spake to the time of His personal return, predict nothing as to Israel for that whole period, but scattering and tribulation and distress. No one can find any opening in these chapters, between the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ for "the in-bringing of all Israel," and their participation for a thousand years in the blessings of the millennial reign.

Matthew 23 closes with our Lord's words to the Jews as He left the temple for the last time, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." As He leaves the temple, His disciples come to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. His reply to them is, "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Here was the intimation to them, that a time would arrive when the Jews should nationally say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" at which time He would return, and they should see Him again. Here was the prediction also, of the utter destruction of the temple they so much admired. When they had reached the mount of Olives and were sat down there, His disciples privately inquired of Him respecting these things. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (or age, *aion*.) Their enquiry evidently relates to the two points just noticed. "When shall these things" — the overthrow of the temple and its buildings — "be?" and "what shall be the sign of thy coming?" — that is, when the nation shall see Him again, and say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. With this coming the disciples identify the "end of the age" — a well-known prophetic epoch, and one as to which they had been instructed of the Lord in chapter 13. "The harvest is the end of the age." They do not ask, what is the sign of thy coming? and what else the sign of the end of the age? They evidently understand that His coming and the end of the age are at the same time, and it is after the sign of its arrival or approach that they so anxiously inquire.

It is of importance to remember, that our Lord's intimation as to the Jews seeing Him again, is not that they should see Him, or that He would come, in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the temple, but that they should see Him when they say, Blessed is He that cometh — that is, at the epoch of their national conversion. Jerusalem was to be destroyed; the temple was to be overthrown; but neither the Lord nor His disciples connect the prospect of His return with these events. Our Lord connects it with Israel's conversion; the disciples with the end of the age: "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?"

Does, then, our Lord, in His reply to the disciples, give the least intimation of any period prior to His coming, of which one feature should be "the in-bringing of all Israel?" and other features" the universal diffusion of the true religion," and "great temporal prosperity?" Let us see. He speaks of delusions and false Christs, and warns the disciples to let no man deceive them. They are to hear of wars and rumours of wars, but they are not to be troubled: all these things must come to pass, *but the end is not yet*. Nation is to rise against nation; famines, pestilences, earthquakes, are to take place: and these are but the beginning of sorrows. Persecutions were to follow; the disciples were to be afflicted and killed, and hated of all nations for Christ's name.

Many were to be offended and to betray one another; false prophets should arise, and deceive many; the abounding of iniquity should cause the love of many to wax cold; he that endureth to the end should alone be saved; the gospel of the kingdom should be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; *and then shall the end come*. Such is the outline from our Lord's lips of what should occur up to the end of the age. Is there any intimation of a Millennium? of a period of universal blessing? Why it seems like a studied accumulation of all that is opposite to this! Wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecutions, apostacies, delusions, false prophets; the gospel, indeed, preached universally for a witness to all nations, but — iniquity abounding and love declining — so that it is only he who *endureth to the end* that shall be saved! Surely there is nothing that resembles a Millennium here!

If it should be asked, Where, in all this, is the Lord's answer to the disciples' question as to the overthrow of the temple? we can only reply, that if there be an answer at all it must be in what He says (ver. 6, 7) of wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, etc. We do not say that this is the answer, or that He gives an answer to that part of their inquiry.\* If there be an answer, this seems to be its only place. And it may be noted that Christ does say here, that "the end is not yet," and "all these are the beginning of sorrows." At verse 14 we reach the end; and from verse 15 onwards, our Lord speaks of details which He had not specified in the general outline. Let us now turn to these details. We quote a long passage here, that it may be before the reader's eye, and that he may thus be the better able to appreciate its force.

\*There is undoubtedly an answer to this question in Luke 21; but this we hope to consider hereafter.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whose readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Here we pause to remark, that it cannot be of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans long ago, that our Lord speaks. He quotes from the prophet Daniel, and speaks, as Daniel had long before written, of a time of tribulation unequalled by any other. Turn to Daniel 12: 1, and you will find that this time of unequalled trouble is not when Jerusalem is destroyed and the Jews dispersed, **BUT WHEN THEY ARE DELIVERED**. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: **AND AT THAT TIME THY PEOPLE SHALL BE DELIVERED**, every one that shall be found written in the book." We intreat our anti-millenarian brethren to look fairly at this passage. Does it not speak of a time of trouble unequalled by any that has preceded it? Does it not declare *that at that time* Daniel's people shall be *delivered*, not *destroyed*? How, then, can our Lord be speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, when He says that there shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, **NO, NOR EVER SHALL BE!** If the tribulation unequalled by any before it, *or any after it*, took place eighteen centuries ago, when Jerusalem

was destroyed, how can Daniel speak of a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, and say that *at that time his people shall be delivered*? Unless we make Daniel and our Lord flatly and irreconcilably contradict each other, we must allow that it is of the same unequalled tribulation that they speak, and that it did not take place at the destruction of Jerusalem, but that it is yet to come to pass, when Daniel's people, the Jews, are to be delivered.\* Let us now proceed with our Lord's words.

\*An attempt is made by Mr. B. C. Young, in his "Short Arguments about the Millennium," to set aside the force of the above texts. "A comparison," he says, "of two portions of God's word, where a like phraseology is found, will show the fallacy" of the argument - he means the argument above stated. "Of Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, we find it written, 'He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.' (2 Kings 18: 5.) Of Josiah, a successor in the same kingdom, it is recorded, "And like unto him was there no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul . . . . neither after him arose there any like him." (2 Kings 23: 25.) On these passages Mr. Y. reasons, to show that if the texts quoted above prove there can be but one unequalled tribulation, these two passages prove that Josiah and Hezekiah were the same man! He then says, "The truth appears to be, that the language is hyperbole, with perhaps a proverbial cast. It is a strong mode of expressing the severe troubles of the several times, and the unusual piety of the two kings." But what resemblance is there between the two cases? Neither passage quoted by Mr. Y. contains any prediction at all; the others are prophecies in the strictest sense of the word. Besides, there is no real discrepancy between the two passages from 2 Kings; no, nor any such appearance of it as to render requisite a resort to hyperbole by way of explanation. It is not for the same qualities that the two kings are said to be unrivalled by any before or after them. One is said to be so for his trust in God, which had surely been tried as in the case of no other king of Judah; the other for the heartiness with which he turned to the Lord. Each was unequalled in his own line of excellence; so that there is nothing whatever in the two passages thus put together, on which to frame such an argument as that resorted to by Mr. Y. The texts on the unequalled tribulation remain untouched, as a proof of that for which they are adduced.

"Then (at this yet future time of unequalled tribulation) if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." There will be no need to go into the desert to seek Him, or to the secret chambers to find Him out. When He comes, "every eye shall see him." Sudden as the lightning's flash, and overwhelmingly manifest to all, as is that phenomenon, shall be the coming of the Son of man. The Lord grant to our readers to find mercy of the Lord in that day!

But *when* is this coming of the Son of man? Does our Lord give any clue as to the time of His return? Yes, He does. He fixes neither day nor hour, but He gives us a mark which demonstrates, with something like mathematical certainty, that it must be prior to the Millennium. Hear His words: "Immediately after (not a thousand years or more, but *immediately* after) the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her

light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." There has been but one time of tribulation spoken of by our Lord. We have seen that He declares it to be unparalleled by anything before it, or anything to succeed it. We have seen, too, how a comparison with Daniel demonstrates, that this time of unequalled tribulation is future, not past — that it is when the Jews are delivered, not when Jerusalem was destroyed. We now see how our Lord declares that immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun is to be darkened, the moon to withhold her light, the sign of the Son of man to appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth to mourn, when they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Could there be a demonstration more complete than this, that the coming of Christ is pre-millennial? We have used the word mathematical, and we do so advisedly. It is self-evident, that an epoch which by its very nature can occur but once, cannot be both before and after any given event. There can be but one time of tribulation such as that of which our Lord speaks; Daniel speaks of such an one at the time when his people shall be delivered; and our Lord says, that immediately after this tribulation there shall take place first the signs of His coming, then the event itself. We have thus the certain proof that Christ's coming here spoken of did not take place at the destruction of Jerusalem — that it will take place when Daniel's people are delivered; or, as the Lord Himself says, just before the commencement of this discourse, when they shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." We all know that this is not at the close, but at the commencement, of the Millennium.

We have thus anticipated the only objection that our anti-millenarian brethren urge against this view of the chapter, and shown it to be utterly untenable. They say that the coming of the Son of man in verse 30 is a mere figure of speech, and represents the interposition of divine power in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans many centuries ago. But though the fallacy of this has been shown already from the chapter itself, it may be well to examine it a little further. It may be well to examine each reference to the coming of the Son of man throughout this discourse of our Lord to His disciples. The discourse extends through Matt. 24 and 25; and the coming of the Lord, or the coming of the Son of man, is mentioned in it ten or eleven times, besides the evident allusion to it at the close of Matt. 23. Now our brethren must understand a figurative coming in all these places, or else they must understand a figurative coming in some of them, and a personal, actual coming in the rest. Let us take it either way. Is it said that the expression is to be regarded as figurative throughout the discourse? What! where it is said, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory," are we to understand a mere figurative coming there? Is that which is represented by the coming of the Bridegroom a mere figurative coming also? When it is said, again and again, "Watch therefore," and, "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh," is all this merely figurative? Is there no personal, actual coming of Christ referred to in passages like these? Why, these are the passages admitted by all to refer to the actual coming of Christ to judgment; and if they are not to be so understood, where is there a passage in the Bible that does foretell that event? One of these passages, that at the commencement of the parable of the sheep and goats in Matt. 25, is understood by our opponents themselves to predict the personal coming of Christ to judgment; and they argue from it to prove that it must be after the close of the Millennium, and identical with the judgment of the great

white throne! No; there is no one who can seriously contend that the expression, "coming of the Son of man," is to be understood figuratively throughout this discourse.

If, then, it be asked, Why may we not understand the phrase figuratively in Matt. 24: 30, and literally in other parts of the discourse? this is our reply — that to suppose our Lord using given phrase ten or eleven times in one discourse *literally*, and that then in the same discourse, without any note of His using it in any different sense, He should once employ it *figuratively*, is to suppose him speaking in such a way as was calculated to deceive; and this, we are sure, is what our brethren would dread to impute to our blessed Lord, as much as we should ourselves. 2. No one can say as to the verse in question, that the language employed is weaker than in the rest, or that circumstances of solemnity announced in the other instances are wanting here. *There is more of solemnity in the announcement of Christ's coming in this and the preceding verse than in any other mention of it in the whole discourse.* Let the reader compare them for himself and judge. 3. As to the particular sense sought to be fixed upon verse 30, namely, that "the coming of the Lord here announced is just His figurative coming to judge and destroy Jerusalem," that is, by means of Titus and the Roman army, the following considerations prove it inadmissible altogether. First, our Lord's intimation of His coming again, which suggested the disciples' inquiry, and gave rise to the whole discourse, connects that coming, not with the destruction of Jerusalem, but with the Jews' conversion. "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh," etc. They did not say this when Jerusalem was destroyed. Secondly, the disciples connect the coming of Christ, not with the overthrow of the temple, but with the end of the age. The end of the age did not arrive when Jerusalem was destroyed. There were to be wars and rumours of wars, but the end, says our Lord, is not yet. The Gospel was to be preached in all the world, and then, he says, shall the end come. Now if the coming of which our Lord here discourses be at the end of the age, it could not be at the destruction of Jerusalem. Thirdly, the coming of the Son of man announced in verse 30 is declared by our Lord Himself to be "*immediately after the tribulation of those days*" — a tribulation which we have seen the Prophet Daniel declares to be, not at the destruction of Jerusalem, but at the deliverance of his people. Daniel's people were not delivered at the destruction of Jerusalem. Fourthly, if Daniel's testimony could be set aside, (which, however, must not be,) if it could be conceded (which yet cannot be) that the time of tribulation unequalled by any other before or after it, is what was connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, still it would not establish the sense sought to be put upon verse 30. If the unequalled tribulation was that inflicted on the Jews by Titus, how could it be immediately after the tribulation of those days that Christ's "figurative coming to judge and destroy Jerusalem" took place? According to this, it was this figurative coming of Christ *that brought the unequalled tribulation!* How, then, could the coming be after the tribulation? Allow that the unequalled tribulation is that of the Jews in days to come, and that they are delivered by Christ's coming, it is then plain enough how the coming is immediately after the tribulation of those days. Such is the meaning of the passage, written upon it throughout as with a sunbeam, and the marvel is, how prejudice itself can understand it otherwise. Fifthly it is of this same coming, with its connected events, that our Lord goes on to speak in the remainder of the discourse. Having given the parable of the fig-tree showing by its leaves that summer is nigh, He says, "So likewise ye, when ye shall see *all these things*, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till *all these things* be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But *of that day* and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also

the coming of the Son of man be." Let the reader observe the words, "these things" and "that day," and how our Lord identifies thus the coming of the Son of man in verse 30, with the coming of the Son of man in verse 37. So also to the end of the chapter. It is of the same event he speaks throughout, connecting the next chapter with it by the words, "THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins," etc. *It is of one event that he speaks throughout.* If, in verse 30, He speaks of His "figurative coming to judge and destroy Jerusalem," it is of the same "figurative coming" that He speaks, when He likens it to the flood in the days of Noe, when He illustrates it by the parables of the evil servant, the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and goats. There is not a single intimation of His ceasing to speak of one event, and of His turning to another. Unless our anti-millenarian brethren are prepared to make all these treat of a figurative coming to destroy Jerusalem, they must give up this as an interpretation of verse 30. The more closely this discourse is examined throughout, the more incontestible is it, that it is a personal coming which our Lord foretells, and that it takes place neither at the destruction of Jerusalem, nor at the end of the Millennium, but at the commencement of that period of Israel's restoration and of universal blessing.

We are well aware, that the argument by which our brethren seek to neutralize all those now presented to the reader, is, that our Lord says, verse 34, "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." But does it not occur to you at once, dear reader, that "all these things" must include more than this alleged "figurative coming" of Christ to destroy Jerusalem? It must at any rate include the unequalled tribulation, *immediately after which* the coming of the Son of man takes place. If then you are determined to take the words "this generation" as denoting the race of men then alive, when our Lord delivered this discourse, see what you do: — you set Daniel and our Lord in hopeless opposition to each other. You make the one say, that this unequalled tribulation is when Jerusalem was destroyed, while the other says that it is to be when his people, the Jews, are delivered. Any interpretation which makes Scripture flatly contradict itself, cannot be the true one. Nor is there the slightest pretext of any necessity for such an interpretation here. Here are two statements of our Lord Himself. One is couched in language which cannot possibly admit of any sense but one: "For then shall be great tribulation, *such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*" There are not two ways in which you can understand or interpret these words. They defy misconstruction. Daniel's words are equally plain, determining that this unparalleled tribulation is at the deliverance, not at the dispersion, of His people and the destruction of their city. Now here is another statement of our Lord, namely, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." This statement is *in itself* susceptible of being variously understood; it is capable of more than one meaning; we must therefore adopt such a construction of it as agrees with those other declarations which cannot be understood but one way. Now, if you regard it as meaning what our anti-millenarian brethren allege it means — namely, that those living when our Lord spake, would see the fulfilment of all these things, you interpret it in opposition both to Daniel and our Lord. "This generation," therefore, *does not mean the race of living men then existing on the earth.* But, again, among the "all these things" which were to be fulfilled, there is "the gathering together of the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (See ver. 31.) Now, interpret this as you may, no one can pretend that this was "fulfilled" within the lifetime of those who heard our Saviour speak. What, then, is the meaning of "this generation?" Our reply is, consult any good dictionary of your own language, and you will find that the primary meaning of the word "generation" is not that of a single succession of men, but that of a

*race, or a people*; and in this respect our own language corresponds exactly with the Greek, from which the expression is translated. This is admitted by our opponents, but they say that it is forced and unnatural to understand the word in this confessedly primary sense here. But where is the proof of this? Here is a prophecy commencing with a prediction of the destruction of the temple; it proceeds to testify of wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, and, finally, of a time of tribulation unequalled by any before or after it — tribulation so great, that unless its continuance were shortened, *no flesh could be saved*. What is there unnatural, what is there forced, in understanding our Lord to say, that notwithstanding all these multiplied, complicated, unparalleled distresses, the generation, the race, the nation of the Jews, should not pass, till all these things be fulfilled? Could anything be more natural than for our Lord to say this, in view of all that He had said before? Could there be a more simple, natural construction of His words? We think not. Besides, this interpretation of the words "this generation," makes the whole discourse harmonious with itself, and with all other Scripture: and if so, it leaves the whole discourse what it undoubtedly is — an unanswerable proof, among many, many others, that the actual, personal, second coming of Christ is at the commencement, not at the close, of the millennial period.

In nothing, perhaps, is the perfection of God's word more remarkably displayed, than in some of those minute co-incidences, on the one hand, and points of contrast on the other, which entirely escape the notice of a superficial reader. For instance, the general correspondence between Matthew 24, 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, is obvious to all. Each contains, in substance, the memorable discourse delivered by our Lord to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, when He had left the temple for the last time. But Matthew's report of it is much more full and detailed than either of the others; Mark's is the least copious of the three, and so far as it goes, most closely resembles that by Matthew; while Luke's, omitting much that Matthew's contains, furnishes some particulars which it has not pleased the Holy Ghost to record by either of the other evangelists. But there is one difference between Matthew's account and the other two, which suggested the above remark as to the perfection of Scripture. The disciples' question in Matthew 24: 3, is thus stalled, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world (age)?" The other evangelists, in stating the question, omit all reference to Christ's coming or the end of the age. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things shall be fulfilled?" is as Mark states it. "Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" is the form in which Luke records it. How is this? Why do they not give the reference to Christ's coming and the end of the age? The reason is obvious, if we do but carefully read the entire context of the passages. Matthew gives, in Matt. 23, the denunciation by our Lord of the scribes and Pharisees and lawyers, and of the entire generation which received its character from these classes of persons; closing, as our readers will remember, with the solemn words, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." As He goes out, uttering these words, the disciples show Him the buildings of the temple, and He predicts their overthrow. Now nothing can be more evident, than that the disciples had both these subjects in view in their question as stated by Matthew; nor could anything be more natural than for Matthew, having narrated what gave rise to both branches of their question, to state that question in full as he does. *The other evangelists omit what suggested one half of the question, and they very naturally, in stating it, omit that part of the question itself.* Neither in Mark nor Luke is there anything as to the Jews seeing our Lord no more until they shall say, Blessed is he that cometh. The only

occasion of the disciples' inquiry, which could be gathered from these evangelists, is the prediction that not one stone of the temple, or its buildings, should be left upon another; and accordingly their inquiry, as stated by Mark and Luke, relates to this prediction alone: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things shall come to pass?"

In Luke 21 we have our Lord's reply to the question as to the overthrow of Jerusalem and its temple. But so far from confounding this, as so many commentators do, with His own predicted return, or the signs which precede it, He carefully distinguishes the one part of the subject from the other, confirming thus, in the most powerful manner, the pre-millenarian argument drawn in our last from Matthew 24. There is no explicit reference in Matthew to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. In the chapter before us, there is; but instead of identifying it, as so many do, with what they designate "the figurative coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven," the Lord places it *at the beginning*, and His own actual coming *at the end* of those "days of vengeance" which were to fall upon the Jews; but He foretells nothing as to the Jews but vengeance and woe, and nothing as to the nations but evil, between the date of this discourse and His coming in the clouds of heaven. How then can a Millennium intervene? And as it is admitted that there is to be a Millennium, how incontestable that it is *after*, and not *before*, the second advent of Christ. But let us examine the passage.

From verse 8 to verse 20, our Lord predicts, in general terms, that wars and commotions should occur, that false Christs should appear, that nation should rise against nation, that there should be earthquakes, famines, pestilences, as well as fearful sights and great signs from heaven. That all these things came to pass in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem, is fully declared by Josephus himself, the Jewish historian. But our Lord forewarns his disciples, that prior to all these things they should be persecuted, and brought before kings and rulers for His name's sake; and He exhorts them in patience to possess their souls. In verse 20 He thus speaks: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." Here is the explicit reply to the only part of the disciples' question which Luke records. Jerusalem being encompassed with armies was to be the sign of its approaching desolation. He proceeds: "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written" — all the terrible predictions of wrath and judgment upon Israel — "may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations." Thus far, all clearly refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and to the calamities preceding it, attending it, or following immediately upon it. And now let the reader mark well the next words. "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*. And there shall be," — When? Clearly, it the epoch just indicated, namely, the close of the times of the Gentiles — "signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory*. And when these things (the things thus foretold as connected with the close of the times of the Gentiles) begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." A prayerful, impartial

consideration of these solemn words can hardly fail, as we judge, to confirm to the reader's mind, the conclusions already drawn from the corresponding chapter in Matthew's gospel. Some of the features peculiar to the passage before us, each affording additional evidence of our main position, or else neutralizing objections commonly made to it, we may now proceed to specify.

1. In that part of this passage which undeniably treats of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, there is no mention either of "the abomination of desolation," "the time of unequalled tribulation," or "the coming of the Son of man." According to the anti-millenarian interpretation of Matthew 24 all these should be found here, connected with this unquestioned prediction of Jerusalem's overthrow by Titus. But none of them are thus found. We read simply of "Jerusalem compassed with armies" as a sign that "the desolation thereof is nigh."

2. The passage before us places the destruction of Jerusalem at the commencement of those "days of vengeance" which must surely run their course ere the Millennium can arrive. If the Millennium is to be distinguished by "the inbringing of all Israel," as we saw in our last is admitted by our brethren, there can be no such period, until these "days of vengeance" on the Jews are brought to a close.

3. These "days of vengeance" are represented as coeval with "the times of the Gentiles." "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

4. The "tribulation" of which Matthew speaks, "such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be," must be the very closing part of the "days of vengeance" or the times of the Gentiles." Daniel's definite assurance "that at that time his people shall be delivered," makes it impossible that it can occur at any earlier epoch.

5. Our Lord's discourse, as reported by Luke, while it omits any specific mention of the unequalled tribulation, does predict that at the close of the times of the Gentiles there shall be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." This surely corresponds with Matthew's account.

6. While Matthew foretells the signs of Christ's coming, and the coming itself, as "immediately after the tribulation of those days," Luke says, "And THEN shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Thus Luke connects the coming of the Son of man, not with the destruction of Jerusalem, but with the close of the days of vengeance on the Jews, and the termination of the times of the Gentiles.

7. As though to preclude the possibility of interpreting all this of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, our Lord says, "And when these things" (evidently distinguishing between "these things" which mark the close of the days of vengeance, and those other things which were to betoken their commencement) "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was surely no sign of approaching redemption!

8. The reader will recollect our Lord's parable in Matt. 19 — a parable spoken to correct the idea that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. We have already seen how it is the return of the nobleman, having received the kingdom, which alone introduces it. Now look to verses 29-31 of the chapter we are considering. Not only were "these things" to be the tokens of "redemption being nigh," but of "the kingdom of God being at hand." "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Now in what sense could the kingdom of God be nigh at hand when Jerusalem was destroyed? The kingdom of God, in its mysterious state as it exists at present, had already come long before the destruction of Jerusalem. In this sense it could not be spoken of as then nigh at hand. In the sense of its open manifestation in millennial glory, it will be nigh at hand when these presages of Christ's second coming begin to come to pass.

9. Our Lord says here, as in Matt. 24, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled;" but as the word "all" must include everything mentioned in the preceding verses, and as the close of the times of the Gentiles is one of these, it is self-evident that he cannot use the term "this generation" as denoting those who were then alive. The times of the Gentiles are not yet run out, and the generation, therefore, of which the Lord speaks, has not yet passed. It is the race, the nation,\* of the Jews, which He thus designates.

\*The Greek word here rendered "generation" is elsewhere translated "nation." See Phil. 2: 15: "a crooked and perverse nation," and the cognate word - *gennema* is frequently thus applied — "Generation of vipers," etc. The kindred Hebrew word is in many instances thus used. Parkhurst observes, "Generation" is also taken for men of like quality and disposition, though neither of one place nor age. "God is in the generation of the righteous." (Psalm 14: 5.) We have also, "the generation of the upright," "the generation of those that seek him," the generation of his wrath," etc.

10. Finally, that it is of the day of His own personal coming that our Lord speaks, is evident from the closing exhortation of the chapter. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." How could the destruction of Jerusalem come "as a snare on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth?" No; it is of His own actual, personal return, at the close of the times of the Gentiles, that our Lord speaks; and the whole discourse demonstrates that this must be at the commencement of the Millennium. Our Lord divides into two parts the period between His delivering this discourse and His return in glory. *Both divisions are so filled up as to preclude the possibility of an intervening Millennium.* Read what He says of the period stretching from the time when He speaks to the destruction of Jerusalem; read His description of the period from Jerusalem's overthrow to His own return: and if wars, commotions, earthquakes, famines, pestilences — fearful sights and great signs — delusions and persecutions — Jerusalem encompassed with armies, and its desolation accomplished — if Jerusalem trodden down, the times of the Gentiles running out their course, perplexity and distress of nations, men's hearts failing them for fear; if these things betoken a Millennium, or can possibly exist along with it, then may a Millennium be expected ere the Lord returns! But if, as is obvious, these things are incompatible with millennial

rest and blessedness, then there can be no Millennium till the coming of the Son of man in a cloud with power and great glory. Our Lord speaks of these things, and of nothing else, from His going away to His coming again. Then, further, He links with His coming again the redemption of those who look for Him and the coming of God's kingdom; while He warns all in the most solemn terms to beware lest that day come upon them as a thief. May His warnings and His encouragements alike sink deep into our hearts!

Ere passing to another branch of evidence, we would ask our readers, Could any interpretation but the one now presented have occurred to your minds, if for the first time you had been considering the chapter before us? Is it not what the plain, obvious meaning of the words would suggest? Why, then, put another construction upon those words? Be assured if our views make it requisite for us to impose upon passage after passage some other sense than that which would naturally and at once occur to us as its simple, evident meaning, our views themselves should be regarded with suspicion. Our own deep conviction is, that Scripture alone, soberly and prayerfully studied, would lead no one to anti-millenarian views. Christians generally were pre-millenarian for the first three centuries. It was when Christianity began to receive the patronage of the world, that the simple, obvious sense of the prophetic testimonies began to be explained away. Christians of the present day become early initiated in anti-millenarian views, and are in danger of turning to Scripture for arguments to sustain them, without having fairly addressed themselves to the inquiry, whether the views themselves have been derived from Scripture. Never let us forget, that the primary question in any case is not, What construction can the words of Scripture be made to bear? but, What is the impression which Scripture itself would at once produce on a simple, unbiassed mind? No one, by the mere perusal of Matt. 24 and Luke 21, would be led to think of a "figurative coming of the Son of man to destroy Jerusalem." The Lord grant to us the spirit of disciples, coming reverently to God's word to hear and learn what He says to us therein, not to exercise our minds in trying what variety of meanings its language may be made to bear.

There can scarcely be a passage more immediately and evidently bearing on the question, whether Christ's second advent be pre-millennial or post-millennial, than Acts 3: 20, 21, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Here the apostle informs the Jews of a certain epoch until which the heaven must receive or retain Jesus Christ. And what is the epoch named? "*The times of restitution of all things.*" Until those times the heaven must receive our Lord. But when those times arrive, Christ will assuredly return. God will send Him. This is what the passage before us affirms.

The importance of this passage is felt by our anti-millenarian brethren, and earnestly do they endeavour to show that it favours their view of the subject. Many, perhaps most of them, contend that the word here rendered "restitution" means also "fulfilment" or "accomplishment," and that it ought to be so rendered in this passage. Their argument would then be, that if the heavens are to receive Christ till the fulfilment of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, it must be till after the Millennium, as the Millennium is clearly included among the all things thus foretold. But supposing this rendering of the word could be allowed, (which yet cannot justly be,) does not the reader at once perceive, that the argument proves too

much for those who produce it? If the heavens receive or retain our Lord, till all things are fulfilled which the prophets have spoken, then must it be, not only till after the Millennium, but also till after the universal judgment. Surely our brethren will not contend that the final, universal judgment is nowhere spoken of by any of the prophets. And yet, if they allow that the prophets have foretold this judgment, and foretold the resurrection, how plain that if the heavens retain Christ till all things are fulfilled which the prophets have spoken, they retain Him till after these events. Thus, if this argument proves anything, it proves not only that Christ will not come to introduce the Millennium, but also that He will not come to raise the dead, or to judge the secrets of men's hearts! An argument which would prove this, is surely altogether unworthy of our regard.

Then again, suppose the word might be rendered "fulfilment" or "accomplishment," what the apostle declares is not (in that case) that the heavens must receive Christ "until the fulfilment," but "until the *times of the fulfilment* of all things which God hath spoken." "Fulfilment" is one thing, and necessarily complete: "*times of fulfilment*" is quite another expression, and denotes the period during which the fulfilment takes place. If, then, the rendering advocated by our brethren could be allowed, the passage would have no such force as they attach to it. It would express a certain lengthened period during which those things which form the burden of prophetic testimony are to be accomplished, "*the times of fulfilment of all things*," etc., declaring that the heavens have received our Lord *until those times*. But surely "*until the times*" does not mean *until the times are over*! That would be until some other times which are to succeed! Suppose the case of a person sojourning at some place noted for its salubrity during the greater part of the year, but unfavourable to health at one particular season, when the east winds prevail. Writing to his friend, he says, "My present place of sojourn will retain me until the times of the east and north-east winds." How would his friend — how would any one - understand such an intimation? No one would suppose that he meant to tarry till the times of these winds were past. Every one would understand that he purposed to tarry till these times commenced or arrived. So in the passage before us, even if we read it as it is contended that it should be read, "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the fulfilment of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began," this does not mean, it cannot mean, that the heavens must receive Him till the times of fulfilment of all things *expire*, but until those times arrive. And what is the period, let us inquire, which alone could be termed, distinctively and pre-eminently, "the times of fulfilment of all things which God hath spoken?" What can it be, save the Millennium? Whatever isolated predictions may have been fulfilled in periods prior to the Millennium, there can be no doubt on any mind, that if any period is designated in God's word, "the times of the fulfilment of all things," it must be the millennial period, which will really be distinguished by the accomplishment of the great body of Old Testament prophecies. It is evident, therefore, that even if our brethren be right in rendering this word "fulfilment," instead of "restitution," the passage says nothing in favour of their theory, but is decisive against it. It affirms that the heaven must receive our Lord "until the times of fulfilment of all things" — that is, millennial times. Until those times; that is, surely, until those times arrive, not until they expire. To suppose the latter, would be to set at defiance all the usages, alike of our own language and of that in which the New Testament was written.

But the word "*apokatastasis*" cannot rightly be rendered "fulfilment." It is correctly rendered "restitution" in our English version, and, as a noun, occurs only this once in the New

Testament. But the verb from which it is formed, occurs several times, and always in the sense of restoring, replacing, reconstituting. The passages we give below;\* as also some instances of the use of the word in other writings than the Scriptures. Referring to the note for proof of what we affirm, that "restitution" is the right rendering of the word, we would put it to any of our christian readers, whether Scripture does not teach us to look for "times of restitution of all things" — whether these predicted "times of restitution" be not identical with millennial times — and whether God has not indeed spoken of these times "by the month of all his holy prophets since the world began?" Till these "times of restitution" — till the arrival of these times — the heavens must receive our Lord; but no longer than this. His return will usher in those times. When He returns, these "times of restitution" will arrive. It is then that Israel will be restored to their own land. The throne of David, so long prostrate, will then be re-established, and He shall occupy it, who is both David's son and David's Lord. Israel's supremacy over the nations will also be restored. The curse will be removed; creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption; even the brute creation, shorn of their ferocity, will sport together, and yield willing subjection to an infant yoke; (a little child shall lead them;) while Satan, expelled from the earth, and forcibly restrained, will have his murderous rule replaced by that of Christ and His heavenly saints; heaven and earth no longer hostile and divided, as they have been since the fall, but "all things in heaven and in earth gathered together in one, even in Christ." These will be "times of restitution" indeed! And until these times arrive, but no longer, the heavens must receive our Lord. His advent ushers in this blissful, glorious era. May our hearts adore Him while exulting in the blissful prospect!

\*The author of the *Horae Apocalypticae*, whose scholarship none will question, says, "*Katastasis* means the actual state, condition, or constitution; and, consequently, *apokatastasis* must most naturally mean a *new and different constitution* of things, generally by *restoration* to what it was originally."

For Scripture examples, I may refer to Matthew 12: 13, "His hand was restored (*apekatestathe*) whole as the other." Matthew 17: 11, "Elias shall restore (*apokatastesei*) all things." Acts 1: 6, "Wilt thou at this time restore (*apokathistaneis*) the kingdom to Israel?"

All these are instances of the use of the verb. As to the substantive, which only occurs in Acts 3: 19, the same writer observes, "By *classical authors* the noun and verb are similarly used in the sense of *restoration: surgically* — of the *setting*, or *restoration*, of diseased or broken limbs, *astronomically* — of the sun *returning into his old sign* in the Zodiac; *politically* — of hostages or exiles *returning to their country*." Instances are given also from the fathers, of a similar use of the word.

There can be no doubt, that the translators were guided by the uniform use of the word in rendering it "restitution," and we should never have heard of any other rendering of it, but for its being, as it thus stands, so irrefragable a proof that the Advent is pre-millennial. Our readers, however, will see above, how little is gained for the opposite theory, even if it could be granted that "fulfilment" is the sense of the word. The heavens retain Christ, *not till the fulfilment*, but till "*the times of fulfilment*," which can mean nothing but what is more correctly expressed as "the times of restitution of all things."

Finally, the whole context of the passage, when collated with other Scriptures, confirms the sense of it here given. The Lord had said in Hosea's prophecy, speaking of the nation of Israel, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." (Hosea 5: 15.) Our Lord Himself had said, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Unnumbered prophecies connect with Israel's repentance and restoration the universal deliverance and blessing of creation and of the earth. The Jews having rejected and crucified Christ, and He having risen and ascended into heaven, Peter is here, by the Holy Ghost, still proclaiming to them the mercy which they had hitherto scorned, and urging upon them the repentance with which Hosea, our Lord, and indeed all the Scriptures connect their restoration and the introduction of universal blessing. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and that\* the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." How evident that "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," and "the times of restitution of all things," until which the heavens must retain the Lord, are one and the same; and that they are identical with those millennial times — those times of universal blessing — which all Scripture links with Israel's repentance and restoration. Repent, says the apostle, that these times may come. We have already seen, in previous papers, that when Israel does repent these times will come. The passage before us declares, that when they come the Lord will come; that the heavens must receive Him till then, but that then He shall be sent from heaven. Nothing can be more complete or decisive than the testimony of this passage to the doctrine of Christ's pre-millennial advent.

\*The word, *hopos*, occurs upwards of fifty times in the New Testament, and is never, save in this instance, rendered "when." "That," is its undoubted and uniform import. "That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2: 35.) "That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings." (Rom. 3: 4.) etc., etc. Whitby, Vitringa, Lightfoot, Doddridge, Rosenmuller, and almost all critics and expositors, whether of millenarian or anti-millenarian views, admit what we have here affirmed.

In turning to 2 Thess. 2 as our next proof of this doctrine, it may be well to remind the reader, that in the first epistle the coming of Christ is referred to *in every chapter*; and so referred to, that no doubt can be entertained by any one as to what kind of coming is treated of. It is, confessedly by all, the actual, personal, second coming of Christ, to which 1 Thessalonians so often refers.

To this subject the apostle returns in the first chapter of the second epistle. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," etc. This, all will agree, is the second personal appearing of Christ. "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." This also, none will deny, refers to the personal coming of Christ,

The second chapter begins thus: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." Is not this also the personal, actual coming of the Lord Jesus? This would, doubtless, be allowed by most.

The apostle proceeds to speak of the idea that the day of Christ\* was at hand, and assures the Thessalonians that it could not come unless there was "a falling away first," and "the man of sin" were revealed. He reminds them of what he had before told them, that there was something withholding or hindering the revelation of this "man of sin," and that what was then hindering would hinder until it should be removed; "and then," says he, shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy *with the brightness of his coming*." Now is this another kind of coming altogether from that which he has mentioned so immediately before? Throughout the first epistle, and three times already in this, he has named the coming of Christ. In all these instances, it is confessed that he speaks of the actual, personal advent of our Lord. He has not changed his subject. So far from this, he beseeches the Thessalonians at the commencement of this second chapter, "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him;" and then, in the same paragraph, in the unfolding of the theme which he thus introduces, he speaks of "that Wicked, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy *with the brightness of his coming*." Can it be, dear reader, another kind of coming he speaks of here? Would it not be doing the utmost violence to Scripture to suppose such a thing? Could we understand any other book, if it were to be interpreted on such principles as would authorize an interpretation of Scripture such as this? Suppose a mere human author to write two treatises, the latter intended to throw further light on the subject of the former. Suppose that a certain term or phrase is used more frequently than any other in these writings, and that up to a certain point it is used always in one fixed, determinate sense. Suppose that it had been thus used twelve or thirteen times without one exception, and that this is acknowledged by all who read the writings in question. There is, however, a fourteenth instance in which the phrase occurs. There is no intimation on the part of the writer that he uses it in a different sense: there is nothing in the immediate context to require that it should be understood differently. Nay, so far from this, it is used in the usual sense at the commencement of the paragraph in which it again occurs in the instance supposed. Now, what could be thought of any one who could contend in a case like this, that the phrase is to be understood in a different sense the fourteenth time of its occurrence, from that in which it is used in all the previous instances? Would it not be seen that his mind was warped, and that, for some reason or other, he did violence to the sense of the writer? And if we should shrink from thus reflecting on the consistency of a mere human author, ought not reverence for the word of God to make us still more fearful of attributing such obscurity and inconsistency to it?

\*There is a difference between "the coming" and "the day of Christ," which we hope to point out hereafter. Further, the word used by the apostle is not "at hand," as in our version, but "present," But this point also we hope fully to examine ere long.

The case before us is even stronger than the one just supposed; and it is stronger if the original be consulted, than if we read simply our excellent English translation. The word rendered "coming" in 2 Thess. 2: 8 is "*parousia*," and the sense of this word will best appear from the invariable rendering of it in those passages where it is not *the Lord's* coming that is spoken of, but where it is used in reference to others. The list we give below.\* Let the reader judge, after referring to the passages, whether an actual coming, or presence, be not in each instance the meaning of the word. The only passage as to which doubt could arise in the mind of any one is the last; and there the doubt would not be as to the coming being actual, but *as to that*

*which comes*. The meaning of the word "*parousia*" is as evident in it as in all the other passages. It is used seventeen times in the New Testament with reference to the coming of Christ.

\*I am glad of the *coming* of Stephanas." (1 Cor. 16: 17.)

God . . . . comforted us by the *coming* of Titus." (2 Cor. 7: 6.)

"And not by his *coming* only." (2 Cor. 7: 7.)

"But his bodily *presence* is weak." (2 Cor. 10: 10.)

"That your rejoicing may be more abundant . . . . by my *coming* to you again." (Phil. 1: 26.)

"As ye have always obeyed, not as in my *presence* only." (Phil. 2: 12.)

"Even him whose *coming* is after the working of Satan." (2 Thess. 2: 9.)

†"Until the *appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Tim. 6: 14.)

"By the *appearing* of our Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 1: 10.)

"At his *appearing* and kingdom." (2 Tim. 4: 1.)

"Unto all them that love his *appearing*." (2 Tim. 4: 8.)

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious *appearing* of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2: 13.)

But this is not the whole of the case. There is another word used in this passage. It is not only said, "whom he shall destroy by his coming," but "by the brightness of his coming." Now the word here rendered brightness is "*epiphaneia*;" it occurs five times besides in the New Testament; and its force may be judged of by the list of passages below.† It is difficult, on any ground save that of the unconscious influence of a theory which preoccupies the mind, to account for any one being able calmly and prayerfully to consider the evidence now before us, and yet resist the conclusion that the coming of Christ, of which the apostle treats in 2 Thess. 2: 8, is an actual, personal coming. No reason can be assigned for regarding it as such in every other reference to the subject in both epistles, while in this solitary instance it is regarded as a figure of speech. In that case, we should have no marks left by which the meaning of the sacred text could be determined — or, indeed, the meaning of any writings on any subject whatever.

Assuming it, then, as settled, that it is the second personal advent of Christ of which the apostle treats, we proceed to inquire, what is the testimony of this passage as to the period of the advent, whether it be before or after the Millennium? What says the apostle? Having adverted to the idea which was gaining ground among the Thessalonians, that the day of Christ was at hand," or present, he thus proceeds: Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come

except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Now, is there here any opening for a Millennium before the second advent of our Lord? The apostle speaks of the commencement, progress, and close of a certain period. It had commenced when he wrote. Its close is at the coming of Christ. And what is it that intervenes? A Millennium? No; he speaks only of the continuance of evil, and of its progress from the incipient state in which it existed even then, to that maturity of daring wickedness which is exhibited in "the man of sin." The day of Christ cannot come, except a falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed. Well, but may there not be a Millennium brought about by the gradual spread of the Gospel, and this falling away come after that? No, for the apostle says "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." The evil had already commenced. There was indeed a hindering power, and one which was for a time to continue. "He who letteth shall let until he be taken out of the way, and then" — yes, what then? A Millennium? No — "then shall that Wicked be revealed." Well, but may he not be revealed, and have his day, and the Millennium follow, and then the Lord come at the close of it? No, that cannot be; for it is by the second advent of our Lord, by the brightness of His coming, that "that Wicked" is to be destroyed. Thus are we guarded by the apostle as to both the beginning and the end of this period. The Millennium could not be at the former, for the mystery of iniquity was working then, and was to work till it issued in the revelation of the man of sin, that Wicked." It cannot be towards the end of the period, for that Wicked," the man of sin, exists to the end, and the period closes with his destruction by the brightness of Christ's coming. Thus are we shut up to the conclusion that there can be no Millennium between the time at which the apostle wrote and the second coming of Christ. The mystery of iniquity, the falling away, the revelation and blasphemies of the man of sin, fill up the whole period; and if there is to be a Millennium, it must be after the second coming of our Lord. *It cannot be before.* The only way of evading this conclusion is to say that the coming of Christ, by the brightness of which "the man of sin" is to be destroyed, is not His actual, personal, second coming. But this we have shown to be doing violence to Scripture, and adopting a principle of interpretation which, if carried out, would rob all language of any fixed, determinate meaning, and render it impossible to decide what is the import of any statement made by any writer, on any subject whatever. Surely we must not adopt such a principle in the interpretation of God's holy word!

We add one more remark. If it should be said, that "consumed by the spirit of his month" means "a gradual weakening of the anti-christian power by the spread of truth," we reply that even if this were so, it would not affect our conclusion in the least. "The man of sin" must not only be *weakened*, but *destroyed*, before there can be a Millennium; and he is *destroyed* by *the brightness of Christs coming*. But then, to consume is not to weaken. "*Analisko*," the word here translated consume," strictly means — to take away, to destroy. It is the word used in Luke 9: 54, where the disciples ask our Lord if they may command fire to come from heaven and consume

the Samaritans. Surely it means no gradual weakening there, but utter and sudden destruction. Neither does the expression, "spirit of his mouth," signify the gospel, or the gracious influences of the Spirit. "*Pneuma*," the word translated "spirit," has for its primary meaning — wind, air in motion, a breathing, breath; and this is doubtless its sense in the passage before us: "whom the Lord shall consume with the *breath* of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." A reference to Job 4: 9, and 15: 30; Isaiah 30: 28 and 33; also Isaiah 11: 4, will show that this phrase is expressive of judgment on the wicked, not the saving operations of the Spirit of God.

We have not space for the consideration of any other distinct branch of positive evidence, such, for instance, as that of the Scripture doctrine of the "First resurrection." Neither can we at present examine the difficulties and objections commonly urged against the pre-millennial view. Both these topics must be reserved for future examination. At present we content ourselves with suggesting some general considerations, which deserve to be weighed by any who would really ascertain what God has taught on this important subject.

Our attention has been hitherto directed to the question entirely as one of fact; we have been seeking to ascertain whether the positive predictions of the New Testament leave any opening for a Millennium between the days of Christ and His apostles, and the coming day of Christ's return in glory. We have examined passage upon passage, which expressly fill up the whole interval with predictions of events of such a character as to be absolutely incompatible with the existence of millennial blessing. We have considered at large one passage, which informs us UNTIL WHEN the heavens must retain our Lord, and have found that it is "until" millennial times, "the times of restitution of all things." Now these are not theories claiming to be in harmony with Scripture, but plain, direct testimonies of Scripture itself, as to the matter-of-fact question which has been brought before us. But may we not now fairly ask our readers, supposing the post-millennial theory to be true, how is it that there is no positive Scripture evidence of it, attempted to be brought forward by its most able and zealous defenders? The only passages produced, as positive evidence of the world's conversion prior to Christ's return, are, the parables of the mustard-seed and the leaven, in Matthew 13 the passage discussed a few pages back, Acts 3: 21, and another, (Matthew 28: 19,) which we hope to examine in our next. The parables in Matthew 13 were shown to teach the very opposite of the world's conversion to Christ prior to His return; Peter's words in Acts 3: 21, we have found to bear explicit testimony for and not against the pre-millennial view; and all we need say at present as to Matthew 28: 19, is, that no one can venture to produce it as affirming that the world will be converted during the present dispensation. The utmost that our anti-millenarian brethren themselves can say is, that this doctrine may be inferred from the passage. The question we would affectionately urge upon these brethren, and upon our readers, is this: If Christ knew that the world was to be subjugated to Himself, and the bright, glorious era of millennial blessing ushered in, by means of the evangelistic labours confided to His disciples and their successors, can we suppose that He would have left us to gather this by doubtful inference from the terms of one single passage? Supposing the anticipations of our brethren to be just, how are we to account for the silence of our Lord and His apostles on the subject? The Saviour knew well the continual stimulus which would be needed to the prosecution of the evangelistic enterprise, and by other motives He carefully supplies that stimulus. If He knew that the issue would be as our brethren suppose, how is it that He does not explicitly say so, and urge this as an encouragement to patience, and

industry, and zeal? Those who expect the world to be converted by the blessing of God on the preaching of the gospel during the present dispensation, do not fail to urge this anticipated result, as a powerful stimulus to exertion; and they object to the doctrine of these papers, as weakening the hands of God's servants by withdrawing this stimulus. If Christ had been of the same mind as these brethren, would not His instructions and exhortations have borne, in this respect, the same impress as theirs? How is it, we again inquire, that they do not? Read the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, from beginning to end, and leaving aside the three passages we have named, where is there a word from which any one could gather the idea that the writers expected the Millennium to be introduced, as the result of the labours which originated with them in their day? The three passages referred to give no sanction really to such a thought. When fairly examined with their contexts, they all decisively give their voices against it. But waiving this for the present, and leaving these three passages aside, we are bold to affirm as to all the rest of the New Testament, that no one could gather from it, that its writers expected the arrival of millennial times prior to the Lord's return. They do not place the prospect of the Millennium before the soul. But we go further, and affirm, without fear of contradiction, that they do place the Lord's coming before the soul. Whether it be exhortations to watchfulness and readiness, as in the first three Gospels, or as comfort under the sorrow of our Lord's absence, as in the fourth, or as the one hope of the Church after it had been formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, as in the Acts and Epistles, it is the one, great, prominent object throughout, with which the future is filled, and to which the eye of the saint is directed. As addressed to the hopes, affections, and conscience of the saints, or as addressed to the fears of the ungodly, the second coming of our Lord is the one great theme of the New Testament, as regards the future. Reader, is not this the case? How can it be accounted for, if the post-millennial theory be correct? What that theory brings prominently into relief before the soul, the New Testament passes by in silence, save in such references to it as place it evidently beyond, and not before, the coming of the Lord. What the post-millennial theory places far in the distance, the New Testament brings forward most prominently, and presses continually, in connection with every movement of the renewed affections, and every detail of the Christian's walk. Remember, we only reason thus after presenting numerous positive proofs from Scripture of the doctrine we maintain, that the coming of Christ is pre-millennial, not post-millennial. But having presented these, it is but due to the subject, and due to our readers, to press upon them these inquiries as to how else Scripture could be understood. The Old Testament treats largely of the Millennium, but as shown in previous numbers, it is always in connection with Israel's restoration and judgment on the wicked. Old and New Testament alike prove that these judgments take place, and that Israel is restored, in connection with the coming of Christ. Every anticipation of millennial blessing in the New Testament either presents it thus, or fully harmonizes with the passages which do so present it. But as the present, not the future, dispensation, is the chief subject of the New Testament, it is Christ's coming which it presents and proclaims throughout; and all its descriptions of the interval which precedes that event are such as exclude the idea of a Millennium prior thereto. Not only have our anti-millenarian brethren to refute all the positive evidence which has been advanced in favour of the doctrine they reject: but, on the ground that their own doctrine is true, they have to account for the total silence of the New Testament regarding it; as well as for its being so written as to suggest at every turn, the imminence of an event, which they maintain to be even now *certainly* at the distance of more than a thousand years!

We add, as a sample of the way in which the New Testament treats the subject of the Lord's coming, and as a passage, moreover, of the deepest practical importance, our Lord's words to His disciples in Mark 13: 33-37: "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." What can be more striking or impressive than this passage? Christ's people are represented as servants, whose master has gone on a far journey, having previously made every arrangement for the well-being of his household, giving every man his work, and setting the porter to watch. The time of the master's return is unknown — but all are to be in constant readiness. By night and by day each one is to be at his post and awaiting his master's return. And lest any private or exclusive application of this should be made, our Lord concludes by saying, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

The Lord grant to us all, that unfeigned reverence for His holy word, and that simple faith in its declarations, to which He has promised the sure guidance of His Holy Spirit. And may He awaken where it exists not, and confirm where it exists, the bright hope of His own return in glory.