

THE TIME AND MANNER OF CHRIST'S APPEARING

The following article was penned by Bro Thomas in response to a correspondent, and published in The Herald of the Age to Come for 1854

In relation to the question proposed by our worthy correspondent concerning the time of Christ's appearing, I would reply, that he will appear to destroy Gog's army on the mountains of Israel, and then to establish the kingdom.

That he will appear to destroy Gog's army is manifest from Ezekiel's testimony, which says, "My fury shall come up into my face . . . and all the men that are upon the face of the land *shall shake at my presence*, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the towers shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord; every man's sword shall be against his brother" (*Ezek 38:18-21*). This is clearly an answer to the prayer of Israel prophetically inscribed in the sixty-fourth of Isaiah, saying, "We are thine, O Lord; thou never barest rule over our adversaries; they were not called by thy name. Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire turneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!"

The prophet then refers to the great event of former years, when the Lord did come down to Sinai, as an illustration of his future descent to save the nation, by making his Name known to his adversaries. Then, in the fourth verse follows that notable passage, quoted by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, showing that when the Lord shall descend to throw down the mountain-dominions of the Gentiles, and to make the nations tremble, he will bring "*The things prepared for them that love him.*" Isaiah's words are these:

"Since the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nether hath the eye seen, O God (or Messiah) beside thee, what he (or Jehovah) hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."

"THE THINGS PREPARED"

In commenting upon the phrase "*what Jehovah hath prepared*," Paul denominates it, "*the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery*," which he says, "*we speak*;" that is, he and Sosthenes: and which, in his letter to the believers in Rome, he styles, "*the gospel of Christ, the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes*" (*Rom 1:16*) "*the things concerning the kingdom of God*," which he spake boldly of, disputing and persuading for three months in the school of one Tyrannus at Ephesus (*Acts 19:8*).

This shows that Isaiah's "*what Jehovah hath prepared*" refers to the thing expressed in our Lord's saying, in the twenty-fifth of Matthew, as "*the kingdom prepared*." Jesus, as well as Paul, preached the glad tidings, or gospel of this kingdom (*Mat 4:23*); and in so doing proclaimed that "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." (*Mat 25:31*). He also asso-

ciated his coming in glory with his coming in power. Thus, in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, "All the tribes of the land shall mourn (see Zech 12:12) and *they* shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

THOSE WHO DID NOT PERCIEVE

Before leaving the text from Isaiah, we may notice that Paul makes "the princes of this age," that is, of the age he lived in, the nominative to "have not heard nor perceived;" for he says, "*had they known*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Then again, he omits the words "*O God, beside thee;*" because when he quoted Isaiah's words, "what Jehovah hath prepared" to be manifested when the nations tremble at the presence of his Son, was known to very many beside the Lord Jesus. It was not so in the prophet's time. The "wisdom of God in a mystery" was previously known neither to the prophets nor the angels; but in Paul's age it was a subject well understood by the saints in Christ Jesus: hence, he says to those of them residing in Corinth, "God hath revealed them unto us, you; so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting by his Spirit ... which we have received ... that we might know the things ... which we speak in the words the Holy Spirit teacheth."

The things unknown to the princes of the Mosaic economy, and revealed by the Spirit in the mystery, are on record in the New Testament; so that if we do not understand them the fault is not God's; but referable to our neglect of the Scriptures, or to our indoctrination into Gentile "philosophy and vain deceit," commonly called "theology," or to both (Col 2:8). Let us then "search the Scriptures;" and eschew the

divinity of the schools, martextually distilled in the pulpit oratory of our day, as we would the poison of asps mingled in golden goblets of sparkling wine. It is mere "superfluity of naughtiness;" therefore abandon it, and "receive with meekness the *engrafted word* which is able to save your souls!" (Jas 1:21).

Another idea is worthy of note in connection with this text in Isaiah. The prophet says that the things referred to, God "hath prepared for him that *waiteth* for him;" but Paul renders it in his quotation, "for them that *love* him." It is evident therefore, from this, that the apostle considers that *they who love the Lord are waiting for him*. Hence, in his writings he emphasises much upon this point:

"it is not all who profess to believe in the personal and visible revelation of Jesus, that love or are waiting for him. No one loves him in a scriptural sense, who does not believe and do what he teaches"

"The Lord," says he, "direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the *patient waiting for Christ*." Again, he says, "Ye turned from idols to God, to serve the living and true God; and *to wait for* his Son from heaven," and in another place, he says, "We through the Spirit *wait for the hope* of righteousness by faith." and again, "The testimony of Christ was confirmed among apostles to "Let their loins be girded about, and their lamps burning; and themselves like unto men that *wait for* their Lord, when he shall return on account of the nuptials." And lastly, Daniel says, "Blessed is he that *waiteth* and cometh to the thirteen hundred and thirty five days;" because when these years shall expire, Michael, the great prince of Israel, shall be revealed, and his waiting saints shall be made like their Lord.

But, it is not all who profess to believe in the personal and visible revelation of Jesus,

that love or are waiting for him. No-one loves him in a scriptural sense, who does not believe and do what he teaches: for, besides that "love is the fulfilling of the law," (*Jas 1:21*), Jesus says, "*if a man love me he will keep my words ... He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.*" This is so much in point, that one would suppose that no man reading it would be able to impose upon himself the notion, that he loved the Lord, while he was living in neglect, and, therefore, on the supposition that he is intelligent in the word of the kingdom, in contempt of his doctrine and commandments.

OBEDIENCE AND BAPTISM

Now, Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom, and commanded those who believe it to be baptized, and thenceforth to walk worthy of the kingdom and glory the gospel calls them to. But who among "the pious" who profess to love Jesus do this? They believe not the gospel he preached; like our friend Storrs, if they believe it, they refuse to be immersed, and denounce immersion as sectarianism. Why then do they not hear Jesus? Do they think he is to be mocked with impunity? That he does not mean what he says when he affirms that they who keep not his sayings *do not love him?*

How little do men appreciate the character of him with whom they have to do. They seem to consider him as one who has as little regard for his sayings as they have for theirs. But if they will lie, "*God cannot.*" (*Tit 1:2*). What has been spoken by his command is irrevocable, and as living now as on the day it was spoken. His word changeth not; and is "magnified of him above all his name". Hence, says the Apostle, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: ... the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (*Jno 11:47,48*).

He then who believes the gospel of the kingdom, and has therefore been immersed, and walks worthy of the kingdom and glory to which he has been called, and is patiently expecting the revelation of Jesus, is the person who is waiting for, and loving him, in the sense of Isaiah and Paul.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A KINGDOM

Having disposed for the present of this interesting passage of Isaiah, we will return to a more particular consideration of the question before us. *The Lord descended to Sinai for the purpose of setting up his kingdom under the Mosaic constitution.* He organized it in the midst of a hostile world, by *first*, delivering his nation from Egyptian bondage; *secondly*, delivering to them a law in the wilderness; and *thirdly*, by driving out the seven nations of Canaan with fire and sword; and the planting of his own nation there in their stead. This was a great work that was not accomplished in a moment. It was the work of a generation; beginning with the proclamation of the gospel to Israel, and the delivery of Jehovah's message to Pharaoh, and ending with the rest from war procured for the nation by the victories of Joshua, a period of nearly fifty years.

In the first stage of this process, the condition of Egypt was awful. Moses, Jehovah's servant and visible representative, and the great type of Israel's future Deliverer, was in the midst of it all. Egypt, the residence of Jehovah's nation, was filled with dead bodies, and its waters turned into blood; frogs, lice and flies, swarmed in the land, and a grievous murrain destroyed their beasts; hail was thundered down, and fire ran along the ground; the land was darkened with locusts, so that the earth could not be seen; and three days' darkness impended over the country, even a dark-

ness that might be felt. This was the way (*Rom 4:13*).

God operated upon the hardened enemies of Israel through and in the presence of his servants. Nothing in Jerusalem and the Holy Land can be worse than these plagues when the prophet like unto Moses shall come as “Jehovah’s servant,” in power and great glory, to “bring the third part through the fire,” in the day of his indignation upon Israel’s foes.

Isaiah has taught us to regard the Lord’s ascent to Sinai as representative of his whose type was the angel in the blazing bush, to Olivet on the east of the Holy City. Jesus, “whom God hath made both Lord and Christ,” will descend *for the purpose of setting up Jehovah’s kingdom again under the New and Better covenant* (*Acts 25:16*).

STAGES OF ORGANISATION

He will have to organize it in the midst of hostile nations, or extreme sensibilities respecting “the balance of power,” which by such an event will be utterly destroyed. Though he comes with power and great glory, as the angels did to Sinai, the work of re-establishing the kingdom will be as formidable an enterprise, and require nearly as much time for it’s accomplishment as did the original institution.

The reorganisation of the kingdom demands the deliverance of the Twelve Tribes from bondage in the Roman Habitable, “pneumatically styled Sodom and Egypt” (*Rev 11:8*): secondly, the delivering to them a law that shall go forth from Zion to them sojourning in “the wilderness of the people” (*Ezek 20:35*); and thirdly, the subjugation of the seven toe-kingdoms of “iron unmixed with miry clay,” that they may be able to march into Canaan, and obtain an everlasting national rest from all their sorrows under Messiah, the prince of Israel, Joshua’s antitype, and the Ruler of the World promised to Abraham and his Seed

These events will be the work of a generation, as were those which ultimated in the original establishment of Israel’s commonwealth and Jehovah’s kingdom, in the Holy Land.

This appears from Micah’s testimony as well as from the magnitude of the work to be accomplished. After stating that the land should be desolate, the prophet intercedes in Israel’s behalf, and says to the Lord, “Feed thy people with thy rod; … the flock of thine heritage … let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, *as in the days of old*.” To this prayer, Jehovah replies to the prophet as the nation’s petitioner, in these words:

“According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him (the flock of mine heritage) marvellous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their (Israel’s) might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth; they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee” (*Mic 7:14-17*).

The reader may learn how Israel fed in Bashan and Gilead *“in the days of old*,” by reading the historical parts of the Bible. The prophet teaches in his intercession that the same thing shall be again: and in the answer to the petition we are instructed that, as the Gentile governments are the great obstacle to such a consummation, Jehovah will make Israel mighty with the Lord their God as their commander (*Is 4:4*) and by their invincible and wonderful prowess overthrow the barrier, and plant them there “as in the days of old.”

The re-establishment of Israel in Gilead and Bashan by “the Lord their God,” or Messiah, is regarded by the prophet as con-

nected with the fulfilment of the promise (*Ezek 21:27*) kingdom by Messiah, “whose made to Abraham. Hence, he says, “God will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.*”

THE DISPLAY OF MARVELLOUS THINGS

Now, the “marvellous things” which Jehovah says he will show to Israel in the sight of the confounded and dismayed nations, he says also shall be displayed during a period equal to that occupied in the coming out of the nation from Egypt into Palestine. This was a period of forty years. The work therefore which Messiah, the Angel of the Abrahamic Covenant (*Mal 3:1*) and Jehovah’s servants (*Is 49:5,6*) have to perform for Israel in restoring the kingdom again to them, will consume at least forty years from and after his advent “in power and great glory.”

The most difficult part of this work is, not the making of the goat-nations to lick the dust like a serpent, but the regeneration of the understandings and affections of the Tribes of Israel. At present they are no more fit to inherit the Holy Land under Messiah the Prince, that were the bondmen of Egypt under Joshua. The rebellious must be purged out from among them (*Ezek 20:35*) as in the wilderness under Moses; that, being renewed in heart and mind, the nation, as a righteous nation, which at present they are not, may be engrafted into its Olive (*Rom 11:24*) by the delivering of the New, or Abrahamic Covenant, which is to be made with the houses of Israel and Judah (*Jer 31:31-34*).

The re-establishment of the *overturned*

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kingdom by Messiah, “whose right it is,” is a work then of the forty years succeeding the advent. It begins with the identification of him that comes as the person that was crucified, some eighteen centuries before (*Zech 12:10; 13:6,8,9*) as the “prophet like unto Moses,” by whose hand their ancestors did not understand that God would deliver the nation; it begins with that “third part’s” recognition which will then have been brought through the fire, that this is Jesus whom their fathers refused, saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us;” even the same whom God sends to be a ruler and deliverer, not by the hand of an angel as in the case of Moses, but by his own arm, as himself the antitypical angel of the bush, to bring salvation for “his own” (*Jno 1:11*).

Jesus, recognised as ruler and deliverer by the surviving “third part,” sends of this escaped portion of the nation, messengers to the nations to declare his glory among them (*Is 66:19, Jer 16:16*). These are *Christ’s apostles of THE LATTER DAYS.* Those we read of in the Acts were *Christ’s apostles of THE LAST DAYS;* and

not to be confounded with the others. Their missions have not the same end in view.

CHRIST’S APOSTLES OF THE LATTER DAYS

The apostles of “the last days” of the *Mo-saic Age*, proclaimed that God would at some future time, *unknown to them*, set up a kingdom, on the throne of which the crucified and risen Jesus should sit as ruler in Israel; but the apostles of “the latter days” of *the times of the gentiles* will proclaim that the Lord Jesus is king, and actually enthroned in the Holy City; and that therefore, the kingdom having come, the “hour of judgement” was no longer in the future, but at length impending, as an electric cloud in

the sultriness of harvest (*Is 18:4*), over the world.

The apostles of the last days preached the gospel as an invitation to the nations and their rulers to "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. To kiss the Son," as a warning, "lest he be angry, and they perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." (*Ps 2:10-12*).

This latter day invitation is of the nature of a demand sent from one to another, who possesses what does not belong to him, requiring the surrender of it to the rightful owner, under penalty of the consequences that may follow. It does not invite to eternal life; but to allegiance and submission to the King in Zion, and consequently to the renunciation of fealty to "the powers that be." It demands liberty for the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, that they may return to their own land, and serve the Lord their God in the place where he hath installed his Name. Such is the nature of the proclamation to the nations and their rulers, which precedes the manifestation of the "marvellous things" to be shown to scattered Israel in the sight of the astonished nations.

THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Wherever there are Israelites to be separated from the Gentiles, and to be gathered out, there the proclamation will be made, even to "the outmost part of heaven" (*Deut 30:3-5*). The class of Jews engaged in making it known; call them apostles, evangelists, angels, messengers, or ambassadors, it matters not, they are *persons sent, qualified, and equipped*, by their government for the work; these are collectively emblematized in the Apocalypse by "another angel flying

in the midst of the heaven, having the Age-gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth ... saying with a *loud voice*, Fear God and give glory to Him; for the *Hour of his Judgement IS COME*." That is, the time has at length arrived when "Judgement is given to the saints of the Most High, and they do take possession of the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven; and take away the dominion of the Little Horn, to consume and destroy it unto the end (*Dan 7:22,26,27*). This is the judgement-work to be executed by Jesus and the saints, the commanders of the armies of Israel; who in the proclamation give the world fair warning of what they intend to do.

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A NEW WORLD ORDER

God sets up the kingdom by his power substantialized in Christ, the saints, and the Twelve Tribes of Israel. They cast down the thrones of the Gentiles, seize upon their kingdoms, and organize the Jews as a kingdom in the Holy Land by reuniting the tribes into one nation under Messiah the prince (*Ezek 37:22,24*). When this is fully accomplished the forty years will be ended; and the gospel of the kingdom an accomplished fact (*Gal 3:8*). The kingdoms, empires, and republics, now existing in the hands of the world's rulers, will then be no more. The political system of the earth will have been entirely changed, a NEW ORDER of things being established, styled by Paul, "THE ECONOMY OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES" (*Eph 1:10*) which pertains to the Age to Come, subject, not to the angels as the present world, but to Jesus and the saints (*Heb 2:5*).

As to the *manner* of Christ's appearing, I would reply that he will come to the clouds of heaven, which are "the dust of his feet," with angels of his power in fire of flame,

with a shout, with a voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet of God; but *not so that all nations can see him.*

He will come as a thief; not being expected; and being in the city of the great King unknown to any beyond the land until he shall cause his presence there to be proclaimed by the symbolical messenger flying in the midst of the heaven. "He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into the heaven." "He went up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." He will therefore come to the clouds which will receive him out of the sight of the Russo-Assyrian-Clay forces on the mountains and plains below.

THE GATHERING OF BELIEVERS

While there, the transformed living believers of the gospel of the kingdom, and the resurrected saints, shall be caught up among clouds for a meeting of the Lord upon air, and so they shall all be with the Lord. It was thus on Mount Sinai. The angels, through whom Moses received Jehovah's law, were in the clouds, and thick darkness on the mountain top, which smoked like a furnace, and shook exceedingly. "The Lord descended upon it in fire ... and the blast of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, so that all the people in the camp trembled." Thus "they met with God" in thunders, lightnings, and thick clouds; but the angelic trumpeters, and him that spake to Moses, they did not see. So, I apprehend, it will be with the armies of the Assyrian Image in Megiddo, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and Edom; they will, like Saul's companions on their way to Damascus, or Daniel's on the banks of Hiddekel, "see not the vision, but quake exceedingly, and flee to hide themselves."

But, says one, is it not written, that "every eye shall see him?" How can this be, if all dwellers upon the globe do not see him? It

is so written; but "every eye" of whom? The next member of the sentence explains whom the "every eye" refers, namely, *even whosoever pierced him.* (*Rev 1:7.*) It is every eye of these that shall see him; and not every eye of the invaders below, or of their compatriots at home. He said to some of those who afterwards pierced him, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out." These will see him. The Tribes of the Land of Israel will also see him, and mourn on account of him, as their fathers did, and for a like cause, in the presence of Joseph at their second interview.

This is a national mourning, or lamentation, resulting from the discovery that they had crucified their king in piercing Jesus; and that, though punished severely, they were punished justly in their tribulation, for slaying the innocent, and imprecating upon themselves and their posterity the blood of the guiltless. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem ... and the land (the tribes of the land) shall mourn." Thus speaks Zechariah—a prophecy reproduced by the Spirit in the apocalypse of John.

STANDING UPON OLIVET

But, he is not only to be received into clouds whence will be displayed the local portents of the advent; but the purposes of his obscuration being answered, he will come down to the mount of Olives (*Zeck 14:4*), whence he went up in the presence of his Galilean friends. When in the clouds, he and his companions are as "the Stone cut out of the mountain, not in hands" - the Power that smites the Assyrian Image upon

its Feet. It may then be said with David, upon the mountains," about to "blow the great trumpet" that shall make the nations tremble (*Is 27:13, 18:3*). The trumpet to be blown is that of they symbolic angel flying in the midst of the heaven. While this proclamation is in progress, the land is being cleansed by the burial of the slain (*Ezek 39*)

How appropriate is this position of the power to the execution of the judgment recorded against Gog! "I will, saith the Lord, rain upon him and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain and great hailstones, fire and brimstone." This, with mutual slaughter, pestilence, and Judah's sword, will destroy the military power of the Image-Clay; so that the constituents of the Czar's dominion, severed from his sovereignty by this worse than Moscow or Waterloo defeat, will fall into other political combinations, styled apocalyptically, "the Beast and the False Prophet, and the Kings of the Earth," to do battle against the power (*Rev 17:14, 19:19*) predestined to grind them into powder (*Mat 21:44*), light as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors (*Dan 2:35*).

The Assyrian power being broken by this terrible overthrow, the Lord comes down to Olivet, and thence descends in triumph to the Holy City. Its gates are opened to him as the King of glory and the Lord of armies, strong and mighty in battle (*Ps 24*) and he is received by the people with acclamations, saying, "Blessed be he that comes in the name of Jehovah!" (*Mat 23:39*).

It may then be said of Jerusalem, "THE LORD IS THERE," (*Ezek 48:35*) as "an ensign

When the rejection of it by the papal nations is announced at Jerusalem, war is declared against them; and the postadventual missions of the second and third angels are executed upon Rome, and all who adhere to the fortunes of her kings. She sinks like Sodom, or a millstone in the sea; and is found upon the earth no more (*Rev 18:21*). The thrones of the papal kings are then overthrown, and with them, the European Imperiality originally founded by Charlemagne upwards of a thousand years ago. The triumph of Jesus and the Saints is then complete. Not a vestige of the Image is left; and its territory occupied by the kingdom and empire of Israel's king. This is the end of the matter; and may therefore now be fairly left with the reader for comparison with what else is written in the testimony of God. Examine the Scriptures quoted, and see if I have not herein correctly methodised the Truth.

(Brother John Thomas, Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, 1854)

DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING

The Bible is the most difficult of all books to understand. First, because the Old Testament division of it contains "The Hidden Wisdom of the Deity in a Mystery," and mysteries are not self-evident; secondly because "it is the glory of the Deity to conceal a thing," that it may be searched out by the honourable and noble-minded; and thirdly, it is difficult of comprehension by the multitude, because their eyes are closed, the ears are hard of hearing, and their hearts are made gross, by the morbid influence of the "strong delusion" entailed upon them, which, as a veil upon the face of all nations, prevents the light of revelation from shining into them"

(Bro John Thomas, The Revealed Mystery)