

THE
PRESENT TRUTH.

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TEXT.—“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.” 2 Pet. 1:12.

WHY talk so much about the coming of the Lord? Can we know anything about when it is to occur? Does not the Bible say, “Of that day and hour knoweth no man”? and even if we could know when it was coming, what is the use of saying so much about it? If we are only prepared to die, are we not prepared for the coming of the Lord? Why make division, and stir the people on this point? Would it not be better to unite with others in converting souls to God by preaching Christ and repentance instead of making a separate party by talking about the coming of Christ? All believe that he will come sometime.

These are some of the most common objections that we, Adventists, meet wherever we go; and to answer them, is the object of this tract. No doubt they seem reasonable to those who make them. Yet we think we can show that they are entirely unscriptural. Our text speaks of “*the present truth.*” Not that Peter is speaking of our times, but it shows that there was in his days, and hence, that there may be at other

times, what he denominates "present truth,"—that is, a truth which is applicable at one time, but is not at another. Some truths are always equally true and applicable; as, There is a God; we should love him; men should repent of their sins, &c. These truths should always be preached. But other truths have a more local and temporary application; but yet are equally important. Noah's case will illustrate this. God, at the proper time, gave him a message to warn the world with regard to the coming flood. This he did for about a hundred and twenty years, till it came. It was important that he should warn the world of that impending calamity. God blessed him in doing it. But suppose that, after the flood was over, Noah had continued to preach that the flood was coming, just as he had before it did come, would there have been any propriety in his action, or any force in his preaching? Would it have been true? Certainly not. The time had passed for that message to be proclaimed. It had been present truth to the generation that perished in the flood; but it was not present truth after the flood was passed: nor would it have been, a thousand years before it came. Did not God send out Noah? Yes. Did he not have an important message? Was it not the truth? Certainly. Did not God bless him in preaching it? He did. Could he have neglected that message and been clear before God? If he had refused or neglected to give it, God would have rejected him and raised up somebody who would give it.

Take another case. When God sent Jonah to Nineveh, the prophet cried, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Was it important that that

warning should be given to Nineveh? We well know it was, from God's dealing with Jonah when he refused to give it; and when the prophet delivered his message, behold, how mightily it stirred that great city. It caused them to repent in dust and ashes. It was the means which God used for their salvation. It was present truth to them at that time, and if they had neglected it they would have perished. But suppose that Jonah, because God so greatly blessed that proclamation, had kept right on preaching the same thing for years afterward, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," would that have been sensible? would it have been true? Certainly not; it had been "present truth," but could be no longer.

Take another case. At the first advent of Christ, God raised up John the Baptist and sent him with an especial message to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. John preached the baptism of repentance, telling them that they should believe on him who should come after him. That was an especial message, an especial warning. God was in it, and greatly blessed it.

While John was preaching, it was emphatically the present truth for that people. Those who heeded it were blessed of God, while those who did not heed it, rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Luke 7:29, 30. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." But after Christ had come and the gospel had been fully introduced, would it have been proper for the apostles, or any others, to preach the same

message that John did a few years before? It would have been entirely out of order. It would not have been truth, and God would not have blessed it. See this fact illustrated in Acts 18:22-28; 19:1-7. Apollos, some fifteen years after the resurrection, did preach and baptize after the manner of John; yet, when Paul came there, he baptized these same individuals over again, into the then present truth of a risen Christ. These illustrations might be multiplied to any extent, but these are sufficient to show the meaning and import of "*present truth.*"

All must agree with us that there are important, stirring truths which the people should hear at one time, which, if heard at any other, would not be true. People are continually asking us, If these things are true, which you are preaching about the coming of Christ, why were they not found out and preached before? In the light of facts already stated, the answer is plain: The time had not come, and it would have been entirely out of place. For Noah, or Jonah, or John the Baptist, to preach what they did a thousand years before the events came to pass, would have been out of place. So it would have been entirely out of place for the people to proclaim the immediate coming of Christ a thousand or even a hundred years ago, when it was not at hand. But when the fullness of time has come, and that event is just at hand, then it is present truth, and a mighty one, too, to proclaim that event. Christ himself illustrates it in this manner.

After stating the signs which should mark his second coming, and further stating that it should be at that time as it was in the days of Noah, he says, "Who *then*

is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" Who *then*, that is, at that time, at the time of his second coming, is a wise servant, and will be found giving the household meat in due season? Look at the illustration. It is that of a man providing proper food for the household during the seasons. Here is a man keeping boarders. During the winter, he provides bread, meat, potatoes, tea and coffee, and other food commonly used in winter. This is considered proper food for the household during the winter, and no one complains; but, by-and-by, spring draws near, and early vegetables come, but he provides none for his table. Strawberries and raspberries are ripe, but he buys none for his boarders; cherries and apples are in the market, but not any appear on his table. He provides for them exactly the same that he did for the winter food. Would there not be some complaining in that household? Yes, and justly too; for he does not provide for them food according to the seasons.

This parable of our Lord beautifully illustrates the idea of instructing the church of God with the proper truths which are due at different ages of the world. This, and this only, will keep the church alive. And here we may suggest that the grand failure which many learned theologians make, lies in the fact that they do not keep up with the times, and preach living truths, which are due in their days. They go back and study the writings and theological systems of eminent men who lived ages before them. Those men were alive to the truths applicable in their days, and with these they stirred the world; and after those days were passed, and

circumstances are changed, these men now take up the same line of argument, fill their minds with these old, dead issues, of the past, and dwell upon them, while other plain and living truths of their own times are neglected. Hence God cannot use them in his work. He has to choose some poor shepherd, fisherman, farmer, or mechanic, whose mind is open to receive the light of present truth. Such humble men, with the living, stirring truths which are applicable to their days, go forth with them and stir the world. Here is where the teachers of the people, the scribes and the Pharisees, erred in their days. Christ upbraided them for not being able to discern the signs of the times. Matt. 16 : 3. Jerusalem was overthrown because the people knew not the time of their visitation. Luke 19 : 41-44.

This brings us to consider another important truth : God always has and always will reveal his truths to his people as fast as they are due to the world. Thus Amos says : " Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3 : 7. This text states the great truth which we are trying to demonstrate, viz., That God never leaves his people in the dark concerning any important event which materially affects them. Before the event comes, those of his people who are walking with the Lord are always duly informed with regard to it. Notice a few examples : Noah was informed of the time of the flood, that it was to be after one hundred and twenty years. Gen. 6 : 3. A short time before it came, the Lord revealed to him the very time it should commence. Gen. 7 : 4 : " Yet seven days, and I will

cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights."

The time of the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt was foretold to Abraham. Gen. 15 : 13, 14. "They shall afflict them four hundred years," said the Lord, "afterward they shall go out with great substance." When the Lord proposed to destroy Sodom, he said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Gen. 18 : 17. Then he proceeded to inform Abraham concerning what he was about to do. Lot, also, was warned, and fled out of the city. Through Joseph, God revealed to Pharaoh the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine which were to come on Egypt. Gen. 41 : 26-30. When the time of Israel's deliverance from Egypt drew near, God raised up Moses to deliver them. Moses knew that the time had come, and that he was to deliver them; for thus we read of him: "For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not." Acts 7 : 25. Moses understood it, though some of the people did not. The number of years that they should wander in the wilderness was foretold. Num. 14 : 34. The seventy years' captivity in Babylon was revealed to his people: "And the whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." Jer. 25 : 11. The very year that the Messiah should come was revealed. Dan. 9 : 25: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven

weeks, and threescore and two weeks." The 1260 years of papal supremacy were foretold. Dan. 7 : 25.

At Christ's first advent it was revealed to holy men and women that they should see him before they died, which, also, they did. See Luke 2 : 25-30, 36-38. Indeed, they generally expected him at that time. God raised up John the Baptist to go before Christ and prepare the people for his coming. Did not John know that the advent of the Messiah was at hand? He did, and told them to believe on him who should come after him. John's mission was no mere guess work. He knew definitely what his message was, and what prophecy he was fulfilling. Thus we read: "Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." John 1 : 22, 23. Here was a prophecy given hundreds of years before. When the proper time came, John was raised up to deliver that message; and he did it, knowing and claiming that he was fulfilling it.

Thus we might show that every great and important event connected with the work of God and God's people in every age of the world, has been revealed to his church just before these events came to pass. When the generation had come who was to witness them, God raised up men to warn the people of their coming. The true servants of God, who are in the light and are walking with the Lord, were always informed in regard to them, and were ready when they came. At the same

time, there always was another class, and a large one, too, who were not only ignorant with regard to these events, but opposed those who proclaimed them.

Now we appeal to the reader, If those minor events, such as the flood, the fall of Sodom, coming out of Egypt, destruction of Nineveh, with the first advent of Christ, &c., were revealed to the people of God, and an especial message given with regard to them just before they came, is it reasonable to believe that the last great day will come and the people of God know nothing about it, no warning be given concerning it? Those events affected only the generation then living, sometimes only a small portion of that, and yet the Lord thought them of sufficient importance to reveal them to his people, and instruct that generation with regard to them. But when the Judgment of the great day shall come, when Christ shall appear King of kings and Lord of lords, when the dead shall be raised, when the world shall end and all things earthly shall be closed up, how vastly more important will this event be than all others. In this grand event all will have an interest, both the living and the dead, from Adam to the last child born. Before this grand and awful event all others sink into insignificance. Shall, then, such an event as this come upon the people of God and upon the world, and God's servants know nothing about it, and the world be unwarned concerning it? Reason itself would teach us that it could not be so. The history of God's dealings with his people in the past shows that it will not be so, besides which, we have abundance of direct testimony that God will do in the last days as he always has before, viz., instruct his

people and warn the world. In proof of this, we now offer a very few plain propositions:—

1. *The Judgment, the Second Advent of Christ, the Resurrection, and the End of the World, are events which the Scriptures teach will come to pass at some Time.*

We are not now concerned as to *when* they will come to pass, but simply with the fact that these events will transpire sometime. Nothing in the Bible, it seems to me, is more plainly revealed and emphatically stated than these facts, and I presume that most of my readers will agree with us on this point. They believe in the literal second advent and resurrection of the dead the same as we do. There is no controversy, then, on this point. However, we will give a few texts out of the scores bearing upon these events.

The Judgment. “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.” Acts 17:31. “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the Judgment of the great day.” Jude 6. “And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Rev. 20:11, 12.

The Second Advent. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and

then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matt. 16:27. "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." Matt. 24:27. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11. "For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." 1 Thess. 4:16.

The Resurrection. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29.

The End of the World. "The field is the world; 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, 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. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace

of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 13:38-42.

Language could not be more explicit than this on these great and awful events. Yes, say our opponents, we agree that they will come sometime, but as to *when* they will come, we know nothing. Christ may come to-night, or next week, or it may be a thousand years before he comes; we cannot tell. If we are only prepared to die, that is all that it need concern us, let it come when it will.

No doubt the objector thinks that this is sound reasoning, and according to Scripture; but look a little further. We often hear these men who declare that the Lord may come to-night, declare that the world must be converted, and that there must be a millennium of a thousand years before Christ comes. Then they go on to argue that the Jews must be converted and return to Palestine, first; that this, that, and the other prophecy has not been fulfilled yet: and still the Lord may come to-night! How they can have the world converted, and a thousand years millennium, in one night, and the Lord come at the same time, I never could see! And yet they stoutly argue both. The Jews must be converted and return to Palestine before the Lord comes, and yet he may come to-night! Many other prophecies have not been fulfilled, and yet the Lord may come to-night! They certainly cannot believe both positions. And further: In saying this, they assume that the coming of the Lord will take place without any signs being given to mark his coming—without any warning to the world, and without his people knowing anything concerning it. They virtu-

ally assume that everything will go right on just as it always has, without any sign or warning, and the first that any one knows, either saint or sinner, the trumpet will sound like a peal of thunder out of a clear sky at noonday. To show the unsoundness of this, I will make a second proposition :—

2. *There will be signs given preceding these events, to mark their coming.* I might give scores of texts on this point, naming the different signs which shall transpire shortly before the advent. I will content myself with quoting two or three which directly assert that there shall be signs. “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Matt. 24 : 3. The disciples inquire directly, What shall be the *sign* of thy coming and the end of the world? If there were to be no signs, Christ would have simply said, Children, do not trouble yourselves on that point; there will be no signs given of these events. But instead of answering them thus, he does proceed to give them a whole chapter of signs on the very point they had asked. Luke briefly sums up his answer thus: “And there shall be 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 begin to come to pass, then look up,

and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:25-28. Here Jesus says that there shall be signs in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, in the earth, &c. So in verse 11, he says, "And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven." And thus Joel says: "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come." Acts 2:19, 20. We take it that these texts settle the fact that the Lord will give signs to mark his second coming.

God has said that, at the proper time, he will hang out signs in very conspicuous places indeed, viz., in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, and upon the earth. And when God shall do this, what will it be for? Will it not be to call the attention of his people and the world to the very event which these signs indicate? Most certainly. This fact alone shows that God will have men know something with regard to it, else why give the signs? And when God shall do this, will it be immaterial whether men heed these signs, or disregard them? whether they believe them, or scoff at them? whether they note them, or pass them by as not worthy of their attention? whether they accept them as the fulfilment of God's word, or deny them to be such? Think of this point a moment. Did not Christ rebuke the men of his time for not discerning the signs of the times? Matt. 16:3. And if men should pay no more attention to the signs of the times

now than they did then, will they not receive just as severe a rebuke from the Lord as they did then? Certainly, they will. Be careful, my friend, there may be more importance to this subject than you have thought.

To show the importance of this, I will make a third proposition:—

3. *A warning message will be given to the world, immediately preceding the coming of Christ.* This is an important proposition, and, if it be true, it shows the importance of engaging in such a proclamation. Here, again we might give a great many texts on this point, but have room for only a few. Let us first reason a moment. God is merciful, long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; hence, he always warns the wicked of coming judgments, in sufficient time for them to repent and escape them, if they will. He loves his people, and does nothing without revealing it to them. Did God warn the world in the days of Noah? He did. So, then, he will here. Christ says, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matt. 24:37. Did God warn the Sodomites? Did he warn the men of Nineveh? Did John the Baptist give a warning message before the first advent? Did Jesus warn them of the fall of Jerusalem? How much more reasonable, then, that there should be a warning here. Did the righteous know when the flood was to come? when Sodom was to fall? when the Jews were to come out of Egypt? when Nineveh was to be overthrown? when Christ was to come the first time? Then will they know with regard to his second advent. Nothing is more reasonable and

just than this conclusion. But let us hear the word of the Lord :

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.” Joel 2:1. What is the day of the Lord? It is when the Lord comes, as will be seen by the following texts: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Pet. 3:10. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” 1 Thess. 4:16-18; 5:1, 2. This shows that the day of the Lord is when he comes, the dead are raised, the living changed, &c. This is the time of which the prophet speaks. He says, “For the day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand.” This fact is further confirmed by the language of verses 10, 11. “The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; for

his camp is very great; for he is strong that executeth his word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" Having shown what the subject is, now look at the prophecy: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion." This was always done to warn the people of some important event. "Sound an alarm in my holy mountain, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble." This shows that it is some awful event that is just pending. What is it? When is this warning to be given, this alarm to be sounded? "For the day of the Lord cometh, *for it is nigh at hand.*" Then when the day of the Lord is drawing near, is even nigh at hand, then is the time that this prophecy must be fulfilled. Will not God see that it is fulfilled? He certainly will, if he has to raise up men from the very stones to do it; and when it is thus fulfilled, what will the world hear? They will hear the blowing of the trump, and sounding of the alarm, here predicted.

Compare this with Isaiah 40:3: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Here was a prophecy given 700 years before Christ. Age after age rolled on and no one came up to fulfill it. By-and-by, in the wilderness of Judea, is heard the voice of a humble man proclaiming this very message. The proper time had come. God, who very jealously guards the fulfillment of his word, raised up a man to accomplish it. So it must be with regard to this prophecy relating to the end. When the day of the Lord is nigh at hand, God will lay the burden of his work upon some who will blow the trumpet and

sound the alarm. All the powers of darkness cannot prevent it.

Take another text. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord. The mighty man shall cry there bitterly." Zeph. 1:14. Thus he goes on describing the terrors of that day, and then says: "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you." Chap. 2:1-3. This shows that in connection with that great day of God's wrath there will be a gathering message to prepare the people to stand in that awful time of trouble. Once more: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his Judgment is come." Rev. 14:6, 7. Here is another prophecy. It is in your Bible the same as in mine. God put it there. He worded it just right. He will see that it is fulfilled at the proper time. God's word cannot fail. This message will be accomplished.

When it is fulfilled, what will the world hear? Just the message here given, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his Judgment is come." This, it will readily be seen, is an announcement that the time for God's Judgment to set has arrived, and this announcement is made to every nation, tongue, and people; hence, it is a world-wide message. Now such a message as this could be true only in the last gen-

eration, because that is the time that the Judgment will occur. It would not have been true if given a thousand years ago, or five hundred years ago; for the hour of God's Judgment did not come then. Hence, this is a last-day message. It is positive proof that, immediately preceding that event, God will cause a solemn warning to be given to the world concerning it. When the proper time shall come, and the signs shall appear, and God shall cause this message to be heralded to the world, will it be a matter of no account whether men heed that warning or not? Can men disregard it with impunity? Can they mock at it and denounce it as the work of the devil, and still enjoy the blessing of God? Can they please God by simply passing it by unnoticed? How did it fare with the men who rejected Noah's warning? with those who did not believe the words of John the Baptist, and other similar messages? And will not those fare the same who shall reject this, when God shall cause it to be given?

We are not now arguing as to whether this message is now being given; that is not the point. But we are endeavoring to show that such a message must certainly be given, whenever the proper time comes, immediately preceding the second advent. Let me call attention again to that oft-repeated assertion, that if we are only prepared to die, we are prepared for the coming of the Lord; and, hence, even though the Lord is coming soon, and there are signs which show it, and the warning is being given concerning it, yet it does not matter if we do not heed them, provided our hearts are only right. This, I firmly believe, is a subterfuge

gotten up to lull men to sleep and to close their eyes to the truth.

To show the fallacy of this statement, look at it in the light of other similar events. Suppose the men who heard Noah preach had reasoned that way. Perhaps the flood is coming, said they, and perhaps it is not, we do not know: and it don't make any difference any way; if our hearts are only right, let it come. What would have been the consequences? They would have perished in the flood just as they did. Suppose that Noah himself had reasoned that way; who would have built the ark? who would have warned the world? Would not God have rejected him, and let him perish with the ungodly, while he raised up somebody else to do that work. Suppose Lot had reasoned thus when he heard of the threatened destruction of Sodom. Suppose, again, that the men who heard John the Baptist had argued thus: He says that the Messiah is soon to come, and that he is his forerunner; may be it is so, and may be it is not. We cannot tell. What matter is it to us? When we see him it will be time enough to believe on him. What good will it do us to simply have our bodies put under the water? if we only love God and obey him, we shall be safe enough, whether the Messiah comes or not. Could they thus reject God's work and God's message with impunity? No; the fact is, God never causes any warning to be given unless it is needed. And when he does this, it cannot be ignored, nor rejected with impunity. Those who reject it thereby give evidence that they do not really love God, nor his truth, and they are not walking in the light. If they were, they would

discern the work of God, would hear the voice of the Master, and would gladly obey it.

4. *The Scriptures teach that when Jesus appears, there will be two classes upon the earth.* One class, the saints, brought out by this proclamation, who will not be in darkness with regard to that event, and who will be looking and waiting for him; the other class, the wicked and unbelieving, who do not believe the signs nor regard the warning, and are scoffing at these things, upon whom that day will come as a thief in the night. These facts are clearly stated by Paul, in 1 Thess. 5:1-6: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

"Yes," replies one, "that is just what I believe. That day will come as a thief in the night. This shows that the Adventists are mistaken, thinking that they can know something about it." Not too fast, my friend. The next verse shows that all who are overtaken as of a thief by his coming will be destroyed. "For when they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Verse 3. This verse gives us the class who will thus be surprised by that event, viz, those who are crying, Peace and safety. But the next verse brings to view the other class—the saints. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." Verse 4.

Nothing could be plainer than this statement. One class will be overtaken as of a thief; the other class will not. Those who are thus surprised by his coming

are found crying Peace and safety; but what are the other class doing? This class are found in the light and watching. Watching what? Not simply their hearts, but watching the signs of the times. Here is one class preaching that the world is growing better, and will so continue to do until the whole world shall be converted. They have no idea that the Lord is coming; they see no signs of it. They do not believe he is. Now, suppose that the Lord should come to-day; would it not come upon them as a thief in the night? It most certainly would, for they do not even dream that such an event is at hand. Hence they would certainly be destroyed; for this is the very class spoken of. Christ says it shall come upon them as a snare. Luke 21:35. They have got their attention on something away in the future, and are utterly blind with regard to the great and terrible events of the end of all things. The first they will know of it they will find themselves overtaken by it, and utterly unprepared for it.

2 Pet. 3:3, 4, brings out additional facts touching these two classes in the last days. "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? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The time mentioned is the last days. What will come there? Scoffers. A scoffer is one who ridicules and makes sport of what somebody else is saying. But what is the subject that they are scoffing about? Their words show plainly what it is, viz., the coming of the Lord; for they sneeringly ask, "Where

is the promise of his coming?" This shows that another class is preaching with regard to the promise of his coming. These scoffers proceed to argue the case. Why, say they, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. This language lets us into the subject of their scoffing. They are scoffing at those who are preaching it, opposing them in their work and trying to meet their arguments.

This shows, 1. That in the last days one class will be found opposing and making sport of the coming of Christ. 2. That another class will be doing exactly the opposite of that, viz., preaching it and proving it. This, again, shows that there will be two opposite classes, the same as my proposition asserts. Daniel gives us some information on this. Speaking of the time of the end, the angel said to Daniel, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand: but the wise shall understand." Dan. 12:9, 10. This is in harmony with the other texts showing that the wicked will not understand with regard to the end, but the wise will understand. The same fact is brought out in Matt. 24:44-51: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods." Verses 44-47.

This is the position of the faithful and wise servant. When the Lord comes, he finds him giving the household meat in due season. We have already shown what that means, viz, to be teaching truths which are applicable at that time. Now, what would be present truth just before the Lord comes. Would it not be the signs of the times, the fulfillment of the prophecies, and a warning to the people of the approaching Judgment? Most certainly it would. The context shows that this is just what the wise servant is doing; for that is the very subject that is under consideration. This fact is further proved by what the evil servant says, whose work is exactly the opposite of that of the wise servant. Listen, therefore, to what the evil servant is saying. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Verses 48-51. By this we see that the evil servant is saying that his Lord delays his coming; that is, that the coming of Christ is not near at hand, as the other servant affirms. Now, while the evil servant is thus preaching against the coming of the Lord, and is feasting and making merry with the ungodly, the Lord suddenly comes upon him, and he is destroyed. This text certainly confirms what I affirm in my proposition, viz., that there will be two classes when the Lord comes—one class faithfully teaching the people with

regard to the signs of the times and the coming of the Lord; the other class opposing this work, and arguing that the Lord is not coming.

5. *This warning message will last through one generation—then the Lord will come.* God does not give his warnings to those who do not need them; hence, when a warning is given, it is always to that generation which will live to see the event of which they are warned. It was so in the days of Noah, and in other cases.

God does not give his warning to one generation and let them pass off from the stage of action, and then bring his judgments on another generation. But the very men who hear the warning will live to see the consummation of it. The signs will be given, then will come the proclamation based upon those signs. In Matt. 24, after giving the signs which should mark his second coming, Christ says, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." Verse 32. Yes; when we see the leaves putting forth, we all know that summer is at hand. "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Verse 33. When are we to learn this parable of the fig tree? Answer. When ye shall see all these things. This locates the time of which he is speaking, viz, when these signs have appeared. Luke gives it thus: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Chap. 21: 23. When are they to look up and know their redemption is nigh? When these things *begin* to come

to pass. Nothing could be plainer than that. See verse 31. "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Now of what time is he speaking? It seems as though the blindest might see that it is the time when these signs shall appear. He says that when these signs do appear, *then* we may know that his coming is near, even at the door. The next verse tells how near. "Verily I say unto you; This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Matt. 24 : 34.

What generation? Not the generation he was talking to, as some have foolishly argued; but the generation he was speaking of, viz., that generation which shall see these signs come to pass. Because he says "this" generation, it does not necessarily follow that he meant the generation then living. Ps. 95 : 10, furnishes a similar use of the phrase, this generation. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways." The psalmist says, "This generation," and yet he was speaking of the generation which came out of Egypt five hundred years before. See Ps. 2 : 7 : "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." "*This day have I begotten thee,*" says the psalmist. Was Christ begotten upon the day that the psalmist penned that? Certainly not. This language was quoted by Paul, and is applied to Christ's resurrection a thousand years afterward. Yet the psalmist says, "*This day.*" How could he properly say, *This day*? Because his mind was carried forward

to the time when that event should occur, and, speaking of that time, says, "This day," that is, the time under consideration. So Christ, when he says, "This generation," means the generation of which he was speaking, the one that should see the signs.

Now we inquire, for a moment, What has come to pass in our days? This thing has not been done in a corner. Everybody knows that for the last thirty-five years or more, there has been a class of people preaching that the Lord is coming in this generation. They have met with bitter opposition, with scoffing and ridicule, with persecution and slander, yet they have steadily gone forward and faithfully warned the world of the coming events. During the last thirty-five years, books and tracts upon these subjects have been scattered by the million, like the leaves of the forest, in every part of the world, till there is scarcely a school-district where they have not reached, or a school-boy who has not heard the proclamation; and there are, to-day, scattered all through the land, not less than one hundred thousand souls who are expecting the immediate advent of Christ.

I appeal to the reader, whether this proclamation has not been extensive enough and long enough to fulfill the prophecies and condemn the world? Paul says that Noah, by his preaching, condemned the world. Heb. 11:7. But compare that a moment with this. He had no one to aid him in that work; but here are thousands engaged in this. He had no printing presses to publish his message; now, we have a score of them constantly aiding in this. He had not a tract; here, we have them by the thousands. He had not

even a Bible; here there is one in every house. He had no railroads or steamboats to facilitate his traveling; now, we can go to the ends of the world in a few days' time. If, then, one man, without a single colporteur, without a paper, without a tract, without a Bible, by his single voice alone, condemned the millions of that generation, even the whole world, how much more will the proclamation here given condemn this generation. Suppose, for a moment, that the Lord should come in this generation; would they not be without excuse? Could they say that they had not been warned? They might say that they did not believe that the warning which they heard was from God, and that would be all that they could say. The antediluvians might have said the same, and all others who have been warned, and rejected the warning.

Dear reader, we pray you to lay these things to heart, and not pass them by lightly. It may be that God is in this work, after all. If you have not seen signs and evidences of the near coming of the Lord, is it because none such have appeared? or is it because you have not been watching for them? If not, give your attention to them. Do you know what are the signs of the last days? The Bible has given scores of them. Could you name a dozen? Might not many of them take place right before your eyes and you not know that they were signs of the last days, simply because you have not studied your Bible sufficiently on this point? May the Lord help you to wake up before it is too late to embrace present truth.

Look at it from our stand-point a moment. The Lord is coming; signs are everywhere appearing; the

warning is sounding through the world; a people is being gathered out, waiting for his coming; the awful events of the Judgment and the plagues of the last days are about to burst upon us; the mass of the world are asleep; a worldly church and ministry are telling them of the golden age soon to come. If these things are so, what is your duty? Is it not to regard the signs, heed the warning, and join the little band who are trying to arouse the world concerning their impending doom? That this may be your decision, is my humble prayer.

SOME FEATURES OF OUR TIMES.

This is an age of brilliant pretensions, but sad realities. Its professions and practices, its facts and theories, present a climax of contradictions.

There never was so much of the form of godliness and never so little of the power.

Never were there so many professors of religion, and never so little of religion itself.

Never so many assurances of peace, and never so extensive and urgent preparations for war.

Never so many tokens of coming danger and calamity, and never such a feeling of security, expressed and implied, on the part of the people.

There never was a time when the doctrine of the immediate opening of the temporal millennium was more universally cherished and talked of, and never a time when every feature of society, social, moral, and political, rendered such an idea more preposterous.

There never was a time when there was so much money in the world, and never a time when there was more wide-spread and distressing poverty.

There never was a time when there were so many remedies for every disease, real or imaginary,¹ which profess to be sure cures, absolutely infallible, and never a time when there existed so much disease, sickness, suffering, and death.

There never was a time when there was so much boasting of progress and advancement on the part of the race, and never a time when they gave more palpable evidence of fast descending into every depth of iniquity and sin.

And what does all this show? It shows that the pretensions on which men build themselves up are a sham, and their professions, hypocrisy. They are willing to deceive others, and to be deceived themselves. This is the time when the prophet tells us that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. We see this work going on before us, which proves that we have reached the time when the prophet's words apply. There is nothing to which men will not put their hand for gain. With worthless nostrums, which the vendors know will not accomplish what they claim, the confidence of the afflicted is secured, and their means filched. Falsity and hollow-heartedness exist on every hand. Truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter. Nor will this state of things improve in this dispensation, but grow worse and worse.

An inspired servant of God has written:—

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despis-

ers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such, turn away." 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

In the light of this inspired declaration, how delusive do the present hopes of this world appear! The church and the world unite in singing the pleasing song of the "good time coming;" but God has said, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them."

Could any one now, looking at the existing state of things, get up a more fitting description of our times than is given in God's word, when it speaks of *the last days*? Hear the professed servants of Christ saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming!" See them as they "eat and drink with the drunken," in the "sociable," the "festival," and the "oyster supper," where a noisy rabble of professedly pious and openly profane are eating and drinking, playing and even *gambling*, in the name of Christianity, and for the sake of the gospel!

Let us be thankful that the Lord sees it all and is displeased. Isa. 59:15. Soon will he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and recompense fury to his adversaries. But he will come in mercy to Zion, and to them that turn from ungodliness in Jacob.

We have reason to sigh and to cry for the abominations which are done in the land. And such, only, as do thus will the Lord save from destruction in that great day. Eze. 9. We patiently wait for the end of that which is false, and evil, and full of violence and strife, and long for the approaching reign of truth, of righteousness, and peace. When the Lord comes to redeem his people, to change the living saints and raise the dead, then will they raise the shout of victory. 1 Cor. 15:51-55. "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

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