

1861 Circular
Delaware River Old School Baptist Association
Held with
The Kingwood Church, Hunterdon Co., N.J.
May 29th, 30th, and 31st days of May, 1861

The Elders and Brethren composing the Delaware River O. S. Baptist Association convened with the Kingwood Church on Wednesday, May 29th, and two succeeding days, to the several Churches whose Messengers they are, send Love in the Lord:

Dear Brethren,- Were it not that the Scriptures, being divinely inspired, are an inexhaustible fountain of instruction, and the theme of salvation of all others the most delightful to the people of God, the writing and reading of Circular Letters, from the long and frequent practice of it by associated meetings, would become a drudgery and uninteresting; but as it is, the saints are permitted and enabled from time to time, by the leading and guiding of the blessed Spirit, to write and read and meditate upon the Scriptures of Truth with an untiring zeal and an increasing interest. We hope therefore, dear brethren, in presenting to you something in the form of a Circular Letter, to be enabled to draw from this blessed fountain of the Scriptures something that may be cheering and encouraging to you in this dark and cloudy day

God has been pleased in His almighty power, to bring this vast world into being and to sustain and support it thus far, and will continue it until all His purposes in the creation of it are accomplished. It would seem from the Bible that the grand object in the creation of it was the *manifestation of His people who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world*, and the setting up of His Gospel kingdom in it, and that all events which have now, and will yet transpire in it, including the malice of Satan, the wrath of man, and the rage of anti-Christ, has been, and will be controlled and overruled by Him for His glory and their good.

For this purpose He sent His only begotten Son into the world – to this end Jesus the Son came down to this lower world of sin and sorrow, was born of a woman, came under the law in order to redeem His people who were under the law, and raise them to glory, and died, rose again, ascended on high, and now sits at the right hand of the Father as their advocate, intercessor and Mediator; possessing all power in heaven and in earth. The setting up of His Gospel Church or kingdom here on the earth by the God of heaven, was of course with a full and complete knowledge of her whole history, prosperous and adverse, from first to last; and hence every necessary provision was made

for her safety and security, although beset with foes on every hand and surrounded with enemies on every side. We read in the Scriptures of mighty walls and bulwarks being thrown around her, (the Church) for her defence, and of watchmen being set upon her walls which shall never hold their peace day nor night; they shall not keep silence, (Isaiah 52:6). She has had, and will continue to have her dark days, her night seasons while she remains here in this militant state, until Babylon shall sink like a millstone to rise no more; but her God is in the midst of her; He shall help her and that right early (see Psalm 46). In the night season it is very natural to enquire of the watchmen about the night, as there is generally an anxiety for the night to be gone and the day to appear; for light and day are so much preferable to night and darkness, except with evil doers. Thus we hear the enquiry, "*Watchman, what of the night?*" (Isaiah 21:11. "*If ye will enquire, enquire ye.*"

If the people of God are inclined to enquire, it is their privilege; let them enquire at the mouth or word of the Lord and of His watchmen whom He has set upon the walls of Zion to look out – to make observations and declare what they see and hear in regard to her enemies, in reference to the night and her future prospects, whether any signs of morning, &c. It is presumed, dear brethren, that there has never been since the establishment of our government a darker time – a time so nearly resembling, not merely dark clouds in the day time, but the darkness of night, without even the light of moon or stars; for the visible Church of Christ in this country than the present. What candid reflecting mind, especially the child of God, can contemplate the present condition of our once happy and united, but now distracted and divided people and nation, without sorrow and grief and mourning and we – without giving vent to his feelings frequently and at times almost insensibly or unawares in language something like the following: - What will the final result of all this be? Where and when will the scene end?

Watchman, what of the night? Can you tell us any thing about it, have you made any discoveries? Do you see or hear anything encouraging, any signs of day? Set, as you have been, upon the walls – standing, as you do continually upon the watchtower in the day time, and set as you are whole nights in your ward. Do you see anything? If so, tell us, for we have great solicitude in the matter – we have intense anxiety in this case; we therefore earnestly enquire, "Watchman, what of the night?" – One answer to this enquiry was, anciently (Isaiah 31), "*The morning cometh, and also the night.*" As the morning was at hand, and would soon succeed the then (or now) present night; but after the morning, night was coming again. This

response of the ancient watchman, is not so consoling to the people of God, as another one in the 9th verse of the same chapter.

Here the answer is, "*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods, He hath broken unto the ground.*" This is immediately followed by the declaration of the watchmen, that what he had thus declared concerning Babylon, he had heard of the Lord of hosts the God of Israel. This is good news and from a reliable source; moreover it is confirmed again and again by other Scriptures. The Apostle John, another watchman, heard precisely the same thing, together with other and more minute details of the fall of Babylon, as recorded in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 18:2.

All of God's watchmen, the record of whose testimony we have, whether in the old or new testament, with one voice declare the destruction of anti-Christ. The fall of Babylon, and all of God's ministers now, bear the same testimony; they tell the same story and shall not hold their peace day nor night, for God has said so. Whether the commotions and revolutions now working in Europe and America, are not designed in Providence for the fulfillment of some of the predictions of prophecy, directly preceding the fall of Babylon, such as the slaying of the witnesses and other important events connected with it, is a point the saints in general and the watchmen of Zion in particular are looking at with much interest.

But, dear brethren, though the night be upon us and the darkness so thick that we cannot see through it, shall we murmur or complain? Do we not know and feel that as a nation we have been highly favored and prospered beyond the nations of the earth? That in our prosperity we have forgotten our dependence; we have grown proud and like Jeshurun of old, we have waxed fat and kicked. Shall we therefore despise the chastening of the Lord, when we know it is meted out to us in mercy, as well as in Justice? That His strokes are fewer than our crimes, and lighter than our guilt: but rather, may we be humbled as in the dust before Him, confessing our sins and transgressions, and cry mightily unto Him that He would, if consistent with His will, cause the sword to be returned to its sheath, or beaten into the ploughshares; the spear into the pruning hooks, and we as a nation learn war no more; and that He will keep us, His professed people from fainting, when we as a nation are rebuked of Him; that He will be merciful to us and enable us to take refuge under the shadow of His wings until these calamities be overpast.

God is His people's refuge and a very present help in time of trouble; therefore would we not fear though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waves thereof roar and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river

the streams wherof shall make glad the City of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. She, (Zion) shall not be moved, for God is in the midst of her. (see Psalm 46). Although the heathen rage and the kingdoms or governments of this world be removed; although anti-Christ, that man of sin and son of perdition, be more fully revealed, 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, (2 Thess. 2), still the Church of Christ is safe in Him for her life is hid with Christ in God, and we have the assurance of our Lord that He will finally consume and destroy the whole of this anti-Christian interest, root and branch, with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. Let us be encouraged then, dear brethren, and life up our heads knowing that our redemption draweth nigh.

In closing, we beseech you, suffer the word of exhortation; stand fast and stand firm in the Truth, and united as one man in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel, shoulder to shoulder, with your eye upon Jesus the Captain of our salvation, attentive and obedient to His word of command; let no selfish interest, worldly friendship or policy calculated to alienate our affections, cool our feelings, mar our fellowship or disturb our peace as brethren, be entertained for a moment by us, esteeming as we do, Gospel fellowship and the society and company and conversation of the saints above every earthly consideration. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking, be but away from among us, with all malice, and be ye kind and tender hearted one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. May the Lord enable us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4).

Gabriel Conklin, *Moderator*.

John T. Risler, *Clerk*.