

1864 Circular on The Coming of Christ

Delaware River Old School Baptist Association

[The Circular Letter was called for and referred to the following committee: Elders G. Beebe, Winchel, Conklin, Trott, Cox, Purington, Slater, Hewitt, Campbell, Rittenhouse, Hartwell together with the author, Elder Harding.

Associations seated: Warwick, Delaware, Baltimore, Corresponding, Salisbury, Conference of Western N.Y., Maine Predestinarian Conference, Maine Predestinarian Association, Lexington N.Y., Chemung N.Y., Licking Association of Particular Baptists, Ky.

The Committee on the Circular Letter reported, recommending its adoption; whereupon it was read and adopted.]

The Delaware River Old School Baptist Association, convened with the First Hopewell church, Mercer Co. N.J., June 1st, 2^d, and 3^d. 1864, to the churches composing the same sends love and fellowship:

Dearly Beloved Brethern:- Time with its rapid strides, has brought about the period of another Associational meeting. The year past has been another eventful one, both in the history of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the religious political world. The saints as yet are unable to take their harps from the willows. They still continue to dwell in a strange land, where the battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood. Their only place of joy is Jerusalem, the abode of peace; and as there can be no hope of deliverance from her captive state but through her Anointed Savior, we will at this time call your attention to the *Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

No subject was so full of interest to the people of God under the former dispensation. It constituted their only theme of joy and comfort. The first ray of hope shed forth upon a guilty world, was the announcement of Christ's coming in the Garden of Eden. "*The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*" Abel saw Him by faith and set forth His coming in the flesh by the offering of the firstling of His flock unto God. Abraham beheld His day, rejoiced and was glad. Moses saw Him in the burning bush as the Preserver of His people. He was also seen by His ancient people of Israel, through all the types and shadows connected with their generations. The prophets, with trumpet tongues, proclaimed His advent. They also testified of His sufferings and the glory that should follow. Immediately preceding His coming in the flesh, to redeem His people from under the law, some of His saints had an assurance that they should not see death until they saw the Lord's Christ. Such were the manifestations of God unto His ancient people. He not only told them that Christ would come, but He pointed out the tribes and branch through which He was to appear. We need not multiply Scriptures to prove that He has come in the flesh. Nor do we intend at this time to argue the great object of His coming in the flesh; but refer you to a few of the many plain Scriptural declarations and pass on. The apostle says, "*Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God.*"

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” – (Hebrews 10:5,6,7,10). He not only came to put away sin for His people, but He also came to destroy death, and him that had the power of death – the devil. The same apostle further testifies, *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the poer of death, that is the devil. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* – (Hebrews 2: 14-15).

After sleeping in the grave till the appointed time, He rises the mighty Conqueror, and ascends to His Father’s throne, bearing the keys of death and hell in His own almighty hand. Before His ascension He assured His disciples that if He went away He would *come again*, and at the time when He did ascend two men appeared and addressed the disciples saying, *“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which ye have seen taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”* But He will come no more *in the flesh*. He told His disciples, *“That there were some of them standing with Him which should not taste of death till they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom”* *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.”* (Acts 2:1). *“And there appeared cloven tongue, as of fire, and sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* He also came in the breaking up of the Jewish nation and scattering them to the four winds under heaven. But His coming which at this time most directly interests us as a church, is that in which He will *appear in the destruction of Mystery Babylon, and the receiving of His Bride into an open manifest union to Himself*. The question arises, When shall this be? And what signs shall precede it? If we were left to form our conclusions from our own judgments, nothing could be arrived at worthy of our consideration. But such is not the case. He pointed out the time of His *coming in the flesh* by certain signs that were appear unto His people Israel. He enabled the prophet Daniel to count the number of weeks that was to be between the delivering of that phropecy and His coming *in the flesh*, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. So He has counted the months in which the holy city is to be *“trodden under foot by the Gentiles,”* and the number of days in which His two witnesses should prophesy in sackcloth, at the close of which they were to be killed, and their dead bodies should lie unburied in the streets of spiritual Sodom and Egypt for three days and a half,, where also our Lord was crucified.

The four hundred and ninety days in the *“seventy weeks”* spoken of by the prophet, prove to be four hundred and ninety years. We might also refer to several other instances where a day in the Scriptures is used to signify a year, but the limits of a circular will not allow it. The forty and two months revealed by Christ unto His servant John, on the Isle of Patmos, in which the holy city was to be trodden under foot by her persecutors, allowing thirty days a month, which is the proper mode of reckoning original time, would make twelve hundred and sixty days, the same period in which the two witnesses were to prophesy clothed in sackcloth. Difficulties may arise in the mind when was the holy city trodden under foot, and when did the two witnesses begin their prophesy in sackcloth? Profane history most unanimously fixes the period to a.d. 606. (Julian time). Admitting this to be true, the time for the holy city to arise from under the feet of her vile persecutors, and the time for the two witnesses to cast off their garments of sackcloth, must be nigh at hand, even at the doors.

But we have something more reliable than profane history, unto which we do well to take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place. Let us go to the Scriptures and see if

these things which were to precede the destruction of the man of sin have been fulfilled. If so, we may safely conclude His end is near. The apostle says, *“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that day of Christ is at hand. 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 exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; 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, and told you these things?”* (2d Thess. 2:1-5). The apostle John has delineated the same character under the similitude of two beasts, the one representing the Papal religion as rising up out of the sea, and the other representing the Protestant religion as coming up out of the earth. He describes their appearance, the power that they were to exercise, and the work that was to be accomplished by them, together with their everlasting overthrow. Our limits forbid the setting forth of either the man of sin, as set forth by Paul, or the beasts described by John in their great variety of workings. We must content ourselves at this time by presenting a few of the last crowning acts of their wickedness.

The second beast (Protestant church/state) was to exercise all the power of the first beast (Papal church/state) in deceiving them that dwell upon the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do, saying to them that dwell upon the earth, that they should make an image to the (first) beast which had the wound by a sword and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the (Papal) beast that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their forehead; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of His name (see Rev. 13). These portraits drawn by infinite wisdom do not lie. False religion through all its ramification has been attended by a constant falling away from Bible truth, so that at this time *“judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, Truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment.”* (Isaiah 59: 14,15).

Are we not witnesses of these things? Truth of free grace has not only fallen, but the whole volume of inspiration, the Old and New Testaments, lies dead in the great city which is called spiritual Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified, and the power of the beast sits enthroned, both in church and state. Surely this is the exaltation of the man of sin above all that is called God.

But amidst all the terrors of his reign, bear in mind that his triumph over the two witnesses is of short duration. Three years and a half is the time set to his rage, and that his existence is no more certain than his final overthrow. The same unerring spirit that guided the prophets and apostles in setting forth the rise of anti-Christ, enabled them to point out her downfall. Paul informs us in the same connection where he sets forth his rise and place of power, *“That He (Christ) will consume him by the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming.”*

The Lord in different ages has raised up His servants to be a mouth for Him. The Scriptures are very full in showing how He qualifies them for the work. We here cite you to only a few instances. Isaiah, after his sin had been made to appear, had a live coal laid upon his mouth with the assurance that his sin was purged, after which he heard the voice of the

Lord saying, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* His answer was, *“Here am I, send me.”* Jeremiah could not be excused from speaking all the words the Lord commanded him, although he felt himself to be a child. *“Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee.”* When the hand of the Lord had touched his mouth, he was as a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and as brazen walls against the wickedness of the whole land. In like manner He called the apostles. When His word was to be preached among the proselyting Jews, or the idolatrous Gentiles, no obstacle that kings or potentates could throw in the way, could in any wise intimidate them from performing that unto which they were called, neither could the weakness of Paul’s brethren in forsaking him, when he was so fiercely withstood by Alexander the coppersmith, turn him back: for the Lord stood with him and strengthen him, that the preaching might be fully known to the Gentiles, and he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. So does He make ministers of the Gospel willing in the day of His power to perform that which He calls them unto, whether it be to root out and pull down, and to destroy, or to build and to plant. Jude testifies of Christ’s coming in the destruction of the ungodly, saying, *“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of the saints, to execute judgment upon the ungodly, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”* (14-15). John says, *“Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindred of the earth shall wail because of Him;”* and then responds, saying, *“Even so, Amen.”* (Rev. 1:7). *“Then He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe.”*

In prospect of so glorious an epoch, can we not by faith look through the present darkness (although to human wisdom impenetrable) to the day of our Redeemer and feel glad, knowing that the day of our redemption draweth nigh? At present we are called to endure great contradiction of sinners against ourselves. *“Let us therefore consider Him, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now forever set down on the right hand of God.”* That same spirit that caused the slaying of the two witnesses in the street of spiritual Sodom and Egypt, is now laboring insidiously to suppress so much of divine Truth as points directly to the means of His exaltation *“above all that is called God,”* or to His *“sitting in the temple, showing that he is God.”*

This spirit should not be tolerated in our churches. No, not for an hour! The words of Him who is given to be a leader and commander unto His people is, *“Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about all ye that bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows, for she hath sinned against the Lord.”* (Jer. 1:14). Ever bearing in mind that the destruction of anti-Christ will be attended with the opening of the temple of God in heaven (the Gospel Church,) and such as are recognized by the King as standing in Gospel order, will have the *“Ark of His testament”* written, *even the whole Truth.* We would therefore exhort you in the language of the apostle, *“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, and against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the*

mystery of the Gospel. For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” – (Ephesians 6:11-20). These words of the Holy Ghost are applicable unto us at this present time. We need the whole of God’s word, whether it be such portions as is calculated to cheer up and strengthen the tried and tempted child of God, or that which points more directly to the subtle religious devices of Satan, under the cloak of an angel of light, to draw aside the saints from the Scriptures, either in his babel-building enterprise and worship, or like Cain in his more open and heaven-daring wickedness to establish his religion upon the earth by the sword, at the expense of his brother’s blood. Those who are called to stand upon the walls of Zion should have the prayers and hearty co-operation of their brethren in staying up their hands while proclaiming the word of the Lord, either in setting forth His great salvation, or that by which He will consume the man of sin. We need not tell you that these last times of wickedness and blind zeal are trying days, that will try the very faith of God’s elect. We trust that most, if not all of you, feel it to be so – days in which men’s hearts fail them, and unless they be made short no flesh can be saved. But our dear Savior has said, “*For the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.*”

Very dear brethren, we close this epistle by exhorting you to stand fast upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, receive nothing of a religious character, however plausible may be its pretext, until you have tried it by the word of God, bearing in mind in all your tribulations that the Lord reigns; that He maketh darkness and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth. This present darkness is necessary for the full development of anti-Christ in all her wickedness to make up the sum total of the image of the beast; also bear in mind that it was midnight (to human appearance the most remote period from light) that the cry was heard, “*Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out and meet Him;*” also bear in mind the situation of the foolish virgins that did not take heed to the instructions Christ had given, and those evil servants who say in their hearts, My Lord delayeth His coming, and shall *begin* to smite their fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, (those who are drunk with the wine of Babylon or Arminianism.) The Lord of those servants shall come in a day that they look not for Him, and in an hour they are not aware of, and shall cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with hypocrites; there shall be weeping and nashing of teeth. May it be our happy lot when our Lord *doth come* to destroy proud Babylon and to receive His bride into an open manifest union to Himself, to have our lamps trimmed, and out lights burning.

P. Hartwell, *Moderator.*

S. H. Stout, *Clerk.*

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