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I. THE ISRAEL TABLET OF MERNEPTAH.

EVER since the Rosetta Stone unlocked the Egyptian hieroglyphs scholars have eagerly searched these ancient records for some mention of the Israelites, who, according to their own Scriptures, sojourned in the land of the Pharaohs for four hundred and thirty years, being cruelly oppressed during a portion of this period, and forced to build for the government the great store cities of Rameses and Pithom, and who then marched out of the country under the human leadership of Moses and with the miraculous assistance of the Almighty. But, although Pithom itself has been unearthed and identified beyond question by its own inscriptions found on the spot, and although the monuments and papyri have given us abundant proofs of the correctness of the biblical references to Egyptian manners and customs, once impeached by a rash criticism, and although the political conditions of the country in the several stages of its history were closely connected with the fortunes of Israel for several centuries and with the outworking of its predicted destiny (Gen. xv. 13-16), yet until last year there has never been found a single clear reference in the Egyptian records to the children of Israel. Neither the brick-makers, who are represented on the well-known wall-painting of a Theban tomb, and who were once supposed to be the enslaved Hebrews, nor the Habiri of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, who are described as having stormed various cities of Southern Palestine in the time of Khuenaten (fifteenth century, B. C.), and whom Haynes and Conder still take to be the invading He-

VII. THE BLESSED HOPE OF THE LORD'S RETURN.

A PREMILLENNIAL Conference was held in the church of the Holy Trinity in the city of New York, October 30, 31, and November 1, 1878.

Three members of that Conference from the Southern Presbyterian Church prepared a "Declaration of Principles" as held by Premillennarians, which was adopted by a rising vote of more than 2,500 persons, members of and in attendance on the Conference.

That "Declaration" was reaffirmed by the great Conference in Chicago in November, 1886, and has been generally accepted as a correct statement of the principles held and advocated by those who are looking and praying for the return of our Lord in visible bodily presence.

The "Declaration" is as follows:

1. We affirm our belief in the supreme and absolute authority of the written word of God on all questions of doctrine and duty.
2. The prophetic words of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ were literally fulfilled in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension; and so the prophetic words of both the Old and the New Testaments concerning his second coming will be literally fulfilled in his visible bodily return to this earth in like manner as he went up into heaven; and this glorious epiphany of the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ is the blessed hope of the believer and of the church during this entire dispensation.
3. This Second Coming of the Lord Jesus is everywhere in the Scriptures represented as imminent, and may occur at any moment; yet the precise day and hour thereof is unknown to man, and known only to God.
4. The Scriptures nowhere teach that the whole world will be converted to God, and that there will be a reign of universal righteousness and peace before the return of our Lord, but that

only at and by his coming in power and glory will the prophecies concerning the progress of evil and the development of anti-christ, the times of the Gentiles and the ingathering of Israel, the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transfiguration of his living saints receive their fulfilment and the period of millennial blessedness its inauguration.

5. The duty of the church during the absence of the Bridegroom is to watch and pray, to work and wait, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and thus hasten the coming of the day of God; and to his latest promise, "Surely I come quickly," to respond, in joyous hope, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It must be affirmed in advance that there are no "arguments" in support of this doctrine except the teachings of sacred Scriptures.

As man knew nothing whatever in regard to the first advent except what God revealed in the Old Testament, so he knows nothing whatever as regards the second advent except what is revealed by God in both the Old and New Testaments.

In common with our fellow-Christians of all communions, our appeal is to the infallible word of God; apart from this, we have no doctrine to state, no arguments to advance.

1. As a matter of fact, the religion of our Lord and Saviour has at no time prevailed supremely in any one community or country, or city, or race, or nation. It has not prevailed universally on any island, or continent, or hemisphere; nor has it prevailed universally in any one generation. It is an unusual event when all the members of even one family are saved.

God, in sovereign grace, under every dispensation has visited a lost race to take out of it a people for himself. Thus far salvation has been by remnants, and so a remnant shall be saved; the little flock does not win the kingdom and bring the world to Christ, but the Father gives them the kingdom, and for the coming of that kingdom the universal church continues to pray. We may be assured that that kingdom will not come without the bodily presence of the King. He will not be crowned Lord of all unless he is here in person to be crowned. The kindreds and the tribes on

this terrestrial ball will not and cannot crown him until the Lord himself is here.

Where in God's great universe will the coronation of the King take place? Not in some far-off star-world in infinite space; not in some other planet of this solar system; but here on this earth where he was born, and lived, and taught, and died, and was buried, and from which he rose, and to which he will surely come back in like manner as he went up into heaven—whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things.

2. As a matter of fact, the kingdom of heaven has at no time in human history, in no spot on earth, in no community, been so manifested and realized that the prophecies concerning the glories of the coming kingdom have been fulfilled even in any one locality and for one short hour.

The statement just made must be modified. Jesus said to his disciples, "Some standing here shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"; and after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John up into a high mountain and was transfigured, and the kingdom was manifested in power and glory for a short season on that high mount; and then and there our Lord gave the type and first-fruits of what the millennial kingdom will be; but the Lord was there as Son of God and Lord of all worlds in visible bodily presence, and without that presence there was neither visible kingdom nor glory.

When premillennarians talk of the coming kingdom, they mean that the transfiguration scenes will be enacted and multiplied all over the globe, with the Lord himself the great central person, around whom two worlds, the visible and invisible, gather to hold converse and adore. Moses, the representative of the dead in Christ who shall be raised in glory; and Elijah, the representative of the living saints who will be transfigured in a moment at the coming of the Lord, the Father looking down with delight on his beloved Son, and the shekinah glory enfolding all. Anything short of this or less than this is not that kingdom for whose coming our Lord taught us to pray.

The evolution of humanity and the Christianization of the

nations fall immeasurably below the object-lesson of the kingdom as presented by the King himself on the mount. Transfiguration and glorification will be the essential characteristics and qualities of the millennial kingdom.

Dr. Nathaniel West says: "Christian chiliasm or premillennarianism is the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ upon earth one thousand years after the Beast, False Prophet, and Apostate Christendom have been judged and punished in a common doom. It is the doctrine of a visible and external sovereignty of Christ upon earth as the outcome of history, the redeemed church of all ages rejoicing in the fulness of a resurrection life, in the actual presence of him who is the Prince of the kings of the earth," a kingdom of outward glory, established upon the ruin of the polities of all nations, wide as the canopy of heaven. It is a kingdom spiritual, in which carnal beatitudes have no place, the beggarly elements of Judaism no honor; a kingdom terrestrial and yet celestial, not of this world but of heaven; one in which Jew and Gentile incorporated together share the victory, blessedness, holiness, dominion and communion of their Lord.

3. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament contains many predictions of the visible bodily advent of the Son of God on this earth of ours; these predictions extend over four thousand years, and embrace details of time, place, circumstances, nations, race, tribe, etc., etc. No Christian interpreter of Scripture has had the temerity to assert that these predictions were fulfilled at the flood, or the call of Abram, or the giving of the law, or the conquest of Canaan, or the establishment of the monarchy, or the Babylonish captivity, or the return of Israel from exile—they were fulfilled literally and exactly in the coming into this world of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary, Son of God, the promised seed of the woman, and in his life, death and resurrection; and men saw and heard and handled this Eternal Life.

So the Scriptures of both Testaments contain many predictions of a second advent of this same glorious person. One verse in every three hundred and twenty-five out of a total of seventy-nine hundred and fifty-nine verses of the New Testament, or one verse in every twenty-five, speaks directly or indirectly of this

second coming. This same Jesus who is taken up into heaven is to return in like manner to this earth.

How ineffable the folly of that Biblical exegete who vacates these Scriptures of all significance by spiritualizing them into the day of Pentecost, the destruction of Jerusalem, the spread of Christianity, the death of the believer. As well teach that the promise of the seed of the woman was fulfilled in the destruction wrought by the deluge, or that it was fulfilled in the death of Moses, or the conquests of David, or the translation of Elijah.

The same canons of interpretation that allow such amazing liberties with the predictions of Scripture as to the Parousia of our Lord would, if applied to the Old Testament prophecies of the advent of the Messiah, rob the human race of its Divine Redeemer, and enthrone Death, the last enemy, as the supreme object of hope to all believers under both dispensations.

We insist that the same rules of interpretation must be applied to the entire series of prophecies which speak of the personal Christ. If all predictions concerning his first advent found a literal fulfilment in his bodily presence, so will all those as to his second coming find the same kind of fulfilment.

4. As a matter of fact, the church is to-day, as for eighteen centuries past, praying "thy kingdom come." The kingdom is here now in germ, in individual hearts, but not yet come in visible sovereignty, in power and glory; nor will that kingdom ever so come until the King himself returns.

There is no faintest hint in the New Testament that the world or the church will be essentially different from what they are now until he comes, who shall make all things not "better, but new."

The phrase, "the conversion of the world," is slowly but surely giving way to the phrase, "the evangelization of the world." The conversion of this world under this dispensation is nowhere predicted in the Scriptures or promised in the New Testament. Before the return of our Lord, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached among all nations as God's witness. The nations or the Gentiles will be visited, and God's people "taken out."

The present mixed condition of light and darkness, good and

evil, belief and unbelief, salvation and damnation, will continue until the end of the age. The gospel net is still taking fish, both good and bad; the wheat and tares in the same field are both growing, and growing together. The great Teacher tells us this will continue until the Son of man shall send forth his angels and make the final separation at the end of this dispensation. "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels."

The parables of our Lord, setting forth the essential principles of the kingdom of heaven, find their solution in the return of the Lord himself. The nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom "returned"; the ten virgins, the five wise and the five foolish, hear at midnight the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him"; the seed sown by the children of the kingdom is caught away by the devil until the end of the age; the devil continues to sow tares until the time of the harvest, when the tares shall be bound in bundles for the burning.

No candid and honest man can deny that the present mixed condition of all human affairs will continue until the return of the Lord himself at the end of the world (age).

The return of Christ is not only "the" hope, but "the blessed hope," of the believer and of the church during these wilderness days, when the Bridegroom is absent.

These are the time, and times, and half a time of the prophet Daniel; the forty and two months of the downtreading of the holy city; the twelve hundred and sixty days of the Apocalypse, when the bride laments the absence of the Bridegroom and prays for his coming; when the little flock is awaiting the return of the great Shepherd; and when, because iniquity doth abound, the love of many has waxed cold. The Chinese empire and the Romish hierarchy claim that the kingdom of heaven is realized in millennial splendor, within the limits of their respective jurisdictions, here on earth and at present; and that nothing more is to be desired than the extension of these empires. Postmillennarians seem to think that the extension and establishment of the church of to-day is all that is necessary to inaugurate the kingdom of heaven here on earth. In view of this theology, the absence of

The King himself has nothing whatever to do with the establishment of the kingdom, or the coronation of the King. Postmillennarians say, The kingdom without the King; premillennarians say, No kingdom without the King.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

He would be a rash man who should assert that "this gospel of the kingdom" either had or had not, at this day, been "preached in the whole earth for a testimony unto all nations." The nations of Asia heard it from Solomon, Jonah, and Daniel, and other prophets; the nations of Greece and Rome heard it from the lips of Christ and the apostles; the Queen of Sheba and the chamberlain of Candace took it with them to their homes in the uttermost parts of the earth; North Africa was the home of flourishing missionary churches as early as the third century; the nations of Europe have all been evangelized; at this moment mission stations and gospel lights girdle the globe, while millions of copies of this gospel of the kingdom, in three hundred and seventy-five of the languages and dialects of the earth, proclaim, as with tongues of fire, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what day your Lord cometh." What is necessary to the fulfilment of this prediction? (Matt. xxiv. 14.) Who shall tell?

5. The condition of the church and of the world at the return of the King.

If the present dispensation is to end in universal righteousness and peace, then how shall one interpret those Scriptures that describe the condition of the race as one of apostasy and abounding iniquity at the Parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The great Teacher sent from God foretold this condition in language that cannot be misunderstood. He selects two events of Old Testament history as unmistakable examples of the condition of the world at his coming, the destruction of the world by the flood, and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Luke xvii. 26-30: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed

them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

The days immediately preceding the coming of the Son of man are described in language of dread sublimity: "Iniquity shall abound; the love of many shall wax cold"; if possible, amid the multiplicity of antichrists, false teachers, and false prophets, the very elect shall be deceived. The apostles repeat the solemn warnings of their Master, and tell us of the man of sin sitting in the temple of God, opposing, and exalting himself above God, with power and signs and lying wonders; of the perilous times of the last days, the seducing spirits, the teachings of demons, the forms of godliness without power; of scoffers and antichrists and persecutions and apostasies. When John, in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, sees the woman of the twelfth chapter, the symbol of the church, arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, riding forth on the scarlet-covered beast with seven heads and ten horns, the symbol of the "world-power" in its totality, no wonder that, as he beholds the horrible transformation of the woman into the harlot, he wondered with great amazement.

"Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

6. The doctrine of this blessed hope has suffered much at the hands of its advocates. Some premillennarians have attempted to fix the times and dates of the future events connected with the return of our Lord; and some have even arranged the exact order in which these events will occur, and have affirmed that they cannot occur in any other. Elaborate charts and diagrams showing the precise chronological succession of the "last things" have been laboriously prepared and triumphantly exhibited; and the "prophe ic times" have been calculated to the day and the hour. These attempts at prophecy have tended to bring the "blessed hope" itself into disrepute with thoughtful Christians, who are unwilling to be taught by those who are wise above what is writ-

ten. Of that day knoweth no man; and the times and seasons the Father hath reserved to himself.

The "day of the Lord" is a definite period of time—definite in its *a quo* and *ad quem*, but, most probably, not a day of four-and-twenty hours, but a period of very considerable duration.

If the coming of Christ is to close this dispensation, and with it to settle all of its unsolved problems, namely, the Restoration of the Jews, the Times of the Gentiles, the development of Antichrist, the Apostasy of the visible church, the Evangelization of the nations, the Resurrection of the righteous dead, the Transfiguration of the living, the Creation of the New heavens and the New earth, it is manifest that nothing less than omniscience can give us an infallible order; and this order is not revealed in the word of God. All efforts to find an "order" in the Scriptures must bear constantly in mind the law of prophetic perspective. The prophet, looking down the centuries and across continents and oceans, sees two or more objects of prophetic revelation in the same line, and apparently in immediate proximity; but when the traveller draws near the first object he finds that the second and third are still far off in the distance.

The day of the Lord is "near" or remote, according to the standard or scale by which we measure duration. "It is plain that that period which is distant in one scheme of things may be near in another, where events are on a vaster scale and move in a mightier orbit. That which is a whole life to the ephemera is but a day to the man; that which in the brief succession of authentic human history is counted as remote is but a single page in the volume of the heavenly records. The coming of Christ may be distant as measured on the scale of human life, but may be 'near' and 'at hand' and 'at the door' when the interval of the two advents is compared, not merely with the four thousand years which were but its preparation, but with the line of infinite ages which it is itself preparing."

The Scriptures represent the Parousia of Christ as always imminent. "Imminence is the combination of two conditions, viz., certainty and uncertainty. An imminent event is one which is certain to occur at some time, uncertain at what time." The

event of our Lord's Return is certain; the precise time of that Return is uncertain. He may come at any moment.

The entire teachings of Christ and the apostles were intended and calculated to produce in the hearts of Christians the hope and the expectation of his return. They were exhorted to wait for the Son from heaven, to watch for the coming of the Son of man, to be ready for him at any moment. The time was so absolutely uncertain that none but a wicked and slothful servant would say, "My Lord delayeth his coming." And this method of teaching did keep alive in the hearts of apostolic Christians the eager expectation and the longing desire and hope for their Lord's return. Believers this day are eighteen centuries nearer this coming than were the men who lived in the first century. What is the attitude of the church towards his second advent? Is there, throughout the church, the eager hope, the longing desire, for the Lord's return that characterized the church of the first three Christian centuries? Do the ministers hold up, according to the proportion of faith, the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ? Is there, on the part of believers, a waiting watchfulness for the coming of the Son of man?

Surely the heart of every saint ought to thrill with unutterable joy at the thought of beholding the glorified form of the Son of man. It is not yet manifest what we shall be; but when he is manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

The world once saw him in the shame and the agony of the cross; the world shall once again see him coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Surely I come quickly, saith the Lord. Let our hearts and lips respond, Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

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