



## **Why should it be thought incredible that Christ should come again?**

Although many people are convinced that Jesus will come again, the great majority find it difficult to believe that such an event can possibly take place. Theories that civilisation will continue, progressing from one life-easing invention to another have received a severe shock through the manufacture of nuclear weapons by means of which mankind could destroy itself. Nevertheless most people shut their eyes to the threat of destruction, feeling that it may never happen, because men will be too afraid to use these weapons on a world-wide scale. Moreover, they also comfort themselves with the reflection that even if it does happen, they may know nothing about the perdition that will engulf them. With these precarious arguments they decide to ignore future possibilities as far as possible and go on believing that the existing state of affairs may continue indefinitely.

It may be a surprise to know that this attitude of the modern mind was the subject of Bible prophecy nearly two thousand years ago. The Apostle Peter wrote about the second coming of Jesus and said,

“... 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”. (2 Peter 3:3-4).

To combat this frame of mind he reminds his readers of the Flood, which was similarly regarded as impossible by those who lived just before it happened. Nevertheless the deluge came, he says, and “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished”. (2 Peter 3:6).

### **THE FLOOD**

Again, to some modern minds, the writer’s argument may not appeal, for the tendency is to reject the Bible record of events of so long ago as the time at which the flood is stated to have taken place. Before, however, a decision is reached that the flood did not happen, attention must be paid to modern discoveries, not only about the physical evidence of its occurrence, but also among the traditions of the nations of the world. Let us consider the latter first.

Mr. T. Miller Neatby writes as follows:—

“As is well known, there are traditions of a great deluge all over the world. For centuries past travellers from Christian lands have been surprised to find in heathen countries traditions of a great flood which occurred in or near the dawn of history—tradition often wonderfully resembling in their details the Bible story of the flood. Such stories have been found—outside the cradle of Christianity and outside the Christian lands of Europe and the Mediterranean seaboard— in India, Burma, China, Malaya, Polynesia and in all the Americas, North, Central and South. The Spanish conquerors of the New World in the sixteenth century were astonished to find in Mexico the story of the flood.”

It is probable that these traditions were spread abroad as the populations of the earth grew and migrated, but it is clear that to create such a widespread and enduring belief, a stupendous event must have taken place.

To mention countries referred to in the Bible, Assyria and Babylonia, both had extended accounts of a great deluge which bear considerable similarity to the Bible record. A remarkable modern discovery was that of a prism which dates back to the time of Abraham and which is now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. It is a catalogue of Babylonian kings and events. In it the following occurs:

Line (39) The deluge came up.

Line (40) After the deluge had come.

Line (41) Rulership descended from heaven.

This again indicates the great break which was caused in history by the flood. The mode of expression “The deluge came up” is in full harmony with the Bible which says, “the fountains of the great deep were broken up”. (Gen. 7:11). There was not only rain from above, but the waters of the sea came up like a gigantic tidal wave.

## **MODERN EXCAVATIONS**

The physical evidence that the flood took place is equally strong. In 1929 Sir Leonard Woolley was excavating on the site of Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham’s city, and records a thrilling discovery. “Suddenly the character of the soil changed. Instead of the strata full of pottery and rubbish, we were in perfectly clean clay, uniform throughout, the texture of which showed that it had been laid there by water ... The clean clay continued without a change until it had attained a thickness of a little over eight feet. Then as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped, and we were once more in layers of rubbish full of stone implements and pottery”.

Commenting on his find, Woolley writes,

“No ordinary rising of the river would leave behind it anything approaching the bulk of this clay band: eight feet of sediment imply a very great depth of water, and the flood which deposited it must have been of a magnitude unparalleled in local history”. Writing to *The Times* on March 16, 1929, he said, “The disaster which thus buried the old settlement and caused a break in

the continuity of civilisation can on the face of it be nothing other than the flood of Sumerian history ... He would have been an optimist indeed who had hoped to produce material evidence for such an event as the flood of Sumerian legend, which is also the flood of the Book of Genesis; but in no other way can I interpret the facts, which our excavations have given us”.

At the same time as Woolley was working at Ur, Dr. Stephen Langdon was working at Kish, near Old Babylon, 200 miles away. He found a similar layer to that found by Woolley and writing to *The Times* two days after the latter's letter, he said, “When we made these discoveries two months ago we were loth to believe that we had obtained confirmation of the deluge of Genesis, but there is no doubt about it now”.

All these facts demonstrate that the flood actually took place and show that the Apostle Peter was repeating no fable when he referred to it. He claimed that the return of Jesus was as certain as the occurrence of the flood. It is, therefore, certain indeed.

Jesus himself also said that the conditions which existed at the time of the flood should also be characteristic of the time of his coming. “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, until the day that Noe entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26, 27). Jesus clearly believed that the flood took place and spoke of it in connection with his second coming.

He went further by quoting another example to warn people to be ready for his coming.

“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.” (Luke 17:28, 29). (Gen. 19:24, 25).

## **SODOM AND GOMORRAH**

In this case also modern discovery has shown that the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone was no mere creation of the Bible writers' imaginations. The district of the Dead Sea has been carefully investigated in modern times and much interesting information has been brought to light. Dr. Rendle Short writes,

“The Dead Sea has no outlet. The Jordan and other streams that flow into it bring down water and dissolved mineral salts; the water evaporates from the surface and the salts become so concentrated that they are deposited in crystalline form in and around the lake. There is a stratum of rock salt 150 feet thick which can be traced for six miles. Overlying it is a layer of sulphur which can be lit with a match. Large quantities of bitumen (asphalt) used to exist around the lake: much has been taken away, but some remains. There is enough oil to cause an oil company ... to commence operations. The slime pits of Genesis 14 no doubt refer to excavations for asphalt. It will be observed that the whole area is highly peculiar. If, by some act of God, the gases

generated in such a region became ignited it is not at all surprising that fire and brimstone were rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah; that masses of salt hurled into the air may have covered over Lot's wife (see Gen. 19:26) (the English translation that 'she became a pillar of salt' gives a misleading sense), and that the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. Kyle says that a rupture of the strata is still plainly visible."

When Jesus compared the day of his coming to the time of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he was clearly referring to an event of history. The reference to Lot's wife in the extract just quoted is illuminating in view of the further words of Jesus, "Remember Lot's wife". (Luke 17:32).

Both Jesus and the Apostle Peter say plainly that the return of Jesus to the earth is as certain as the occurrence of the historical events to which they refer.

### **THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS**

When we turn to direct testimony concerning the personal return of Jesus, the Bible affords us almost an embarrassment of evidence. To take a general consideration first, there are about 100 passages in the Old Testament which foretold his first coming. In the New Testament there are over 300 passages which refer directly to his second coming. The first 100 were fulfilled, giving the assurance that the 300 will also be realised at the appropriate time.

Turning to specific passages, evidence for the second coming rests upon the witness of Jesus himself; of angels; and of men.

The Lord said,

"The Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." (Matt. 25:31).

"Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21:27).

### **THE TESTIMONY OF ANGELS**

When he ascended to heaven, after his resurrection, angels declared,

"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 1:11).

### **THE TESTIMONY OF APOSTLES**

The Apostle Peter said,

"He (God) shall send Jesus Christ whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began". (Acts 3:21).

The Apostle Paul affirmed that God had appointed a day in which He would judge (rule) the world in righteousness by an ordained man, whose resurrection from the dead was a guarantee of the truth of what the Apostle said. (Acts 17:31). The subject was so near to this apostle's heart that in each of the eight chapters which are found in two letters which he wrote to believers in Christ in Thessalonica, he makes a clear reference to the second coming.

The Apostle James wrote,

“Be patient therefore brethren until the coming of the Lord”. (James 5:7).

The Apostle John was also certain of the return of Jesus for he wrote,

“It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”. (1 John 3:2).

This united testimony proclaims that the Lord will come indeed.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE RETURN**

The Lord's return being so sure, the question arises as to the purposes for which he is coming. The main objects are two. First he comes for resurrection and judgment. The Apostle Paul declares,

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel, with a trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”. (1 Thess. 4:16).

When the dead who are responsible to judgment have been raised, the judgment will take place for “He shall judge the quick (the living) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom”. Those who have been raised from the dead will be joined by those who are alive and responsible to judgment. “There shall be two in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left.” (Matt. 24:40).

## **JUDGMENT**

The judgment scene is described in Matthew 25. There are explained the rewards and the punishments entailed. “These (the wicked) will go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”. (v. 46). Everlasting punishment is not eternal torment, but eternal destruction, for we are told that the wicked are to be left “neither root nor branch” (Malachi 4:1), and are to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. (1 Thess. 1:9).

Eternal life is immortalisation of body, for it is written that Christ shall “change our vile body and fashion it like unto his own glorious body”, (Philippians 3:21) and “this corruptible must put on incorruptibility and this mortal must put on immortality”. (1 Cor. 15:53).

## **THE KINGDOM FROM HEAVEN**

The second object of Christ's coming is to take control of the territories of the world and rule them with justice. This development was referred to in passages already quoted. Jesus said 'He would sit on the throne of his glory' and the Apostle Paul said he (Jesus) will rule the world in righteousness. The prophet Daniel had previously declared that in the days of certain kings "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, but it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms and it shall stand for ever". (Dan. 2:44). The "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John) saw a vision of the future and heard heavenly voices which declared prophetically, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever". (Rev. 11:15).

These passages testify that when Jesus comes again he will set up a world-wide kingdom, which will bring to an end the reign of human selfishness and sorrow and bring in a golden era of peace and prosperity for all mankind; for he is the "prince of peace". (Isa. 9:6).

## **REIGNING WITH CHRIST**

We may live to enjoy the glories of the kingdom from heaven for Jesus instructed his followers to preach the Gospel in all the world and added, "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved". By belief of the gospel of the kingdom; by acceptance of Jesus as the Saviour from sin, by baptism into him; and by patient waiting for his coming, we may be with Jesus when he comes in his kingdom, for it is declared concerning those who believe in him,

"Thou has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:9, 10).

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Originally published by the



Christadelphian Auxiliary Lecturing Society  
<http://www.godsaves.co.uk>