

INTRODUCTION.

THE doctrine of the Lord's return is one of the most prominent doctrines of the New Testament. Scarcely any other truth of Christianity is so frequently mentioned and so strongly emphasized by the New Testament writers. "Maranatha" (the Lord cometh) was a watchword in the primitive Church. The early Christians lived in constant expectation of the Bridegroom's return. They "loved His appearing." They were inspired and comforted with the hope of the epiphany. The imminence of this event is everywhere urged in the gospels, the Acts, and the apocalypse, as a motive to holiness, zeal, diligence, patience, faithfulness, and all other Christian virtues and modes of Christian activity. This of itself is sufficient warrant for preaching, teaching, or writing on the theme by any one who believes in the New Testament Scriptures.

Not only was this doctrine prominent in the apostolic Church, but during the two or three centuries immediately following the apostolic age the Church, with almost one voice, held the belief that the Lord Jesus Christ might