

Miss Weston

THE TORONTO CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

VOL. III.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1853.

No. 11.

Doctrine and Duty.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDING TO PROPHECY.

On this subject much stress is laid in the Holy Scriptures; and the people of God, to whom the sure word of prophecy is sent, are always required to give it their closest attention. A slight reference to the testimony of Holy Writ, will shew us the truth of this remark:—

2 Chron. xx. 20; "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

— xxxvi. 15, 16; "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

Jer. v. 11-14; "For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord. They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword or famine: and the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them; thus shall it be done unto them.

"Wherefore, thus saith the Lord God of Hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

1 Thess. v. 20; "Despise not prophesyings.

2 Pet. iii. 1, 2; "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

"Rev. i. 3; "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

— xx. 7; "Behold I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of this book.

These passages teach us that proper attention to unfulfilled prophecy is the means of blessing; and that the neglect of it is the means of ruin. We must, therefore, be cautious of men who teach us to leave unfulfilled prophecy alone; and to believe that it can only be understood after it is fulfilled. The study of unfulfilled prophecy, says the Rev. William Burgh, is useful as the means of warning, as the means of promise; and as the means of

instruction in the dispensations of Infinite wisdom. A few facts in Scripture, will shew us the truth of this opinion:—

1. In the case of Noah, we see one use of unfulfilled prophecy, as the means of warning. Noah was apprised by the word of the Lord, of the abounding of iniquity in his day, and of the approaching catastrophe, by which the wicked were to perish. He believed the word of the Lord; was moved with fear; and built an ark, by Divine direction, for the saving of himself and his family. By these means he was preserved from the calamity in which others were involved. Thus his attention to unfulfilled prophecy was the means of saving him; but others disregarded the warning; and their inattention to the sure word of prophecy proved their ruin.

2. In the case of Lot, we have another proof of the happy consequences of taking heed to prophecy. The angels warned him of the judgment which was to be executed upon unhappy Sodom. He believed their words, and prepared for his departure. But the designs of mercy extended farther than himself, and his immediate family. "Hast thou here any beside? Sons-in-law, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place." He made the attempt; spake unto his sons-in-law, and said, "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city; but he seemed like one that mocked to his sons-in-law." Lot, by taking the prophetic warning, saved his own life, and that of two of his children; but all the inhabitants beside perished in fire and brimstone, because they disregarded the sure word of prophecy.

3. In the plagues of Egypt, we have further proof of the consequences of regarding and disregarding prophecy. "Send, therefore, now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. He that feared the word of the Lord, among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses; but he that regarded not the word of the Lord, left his servants and his cattle in the field. And the Lord sent thunder and hail; and the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast, and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." In this fearful loss of property and life, we see another proof of the necessity of taking heed to the warning voice of prophecy.

4. The case of the Israelites is also monitory. Why was their beautiful city twice destroyed, and their magnificent temple twice reduced to a heap of smoking ashes? Why were they repeatedly subjected so fearfully to the terrors of siege and famine, that mothers fed upon the flesh of their murdered children? The Divine

given answer is, "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets." This was their sin, the rejecting of prophetic instruction, and terrible were the consequences. But terrible as these consequences were, there were others still more terrible. "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him." The consequences of this fatal neglect of the voice of prophecy are not confined to the present life—they run into eternity. The Lord Jesus says, "Therefore, I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This is a fearful case. "Blindness in part hath happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Before Israel is again visited, the elect church, the bride of the Lamb, who shall sit with him in his throne, and reign with him in his kingdom, will be complete and gathered to himself; and, therefore, whatever felicity they may enjoy in their renewed state, in the land of Canaan, they can never rise to the dignity of joint-heirship with Christ. The blessedness of reigning with him is limited to those who have a part in the first resurrection; but that resurrection is past before Israel will be converted and restored. Here we have another of the lamentable consequences of neglecting the word of prophecy. We need not to multiply passages; the above are sufficient to shew us that our welfare in time and in eternity depends upon taking heed to prophetic instruction.

II. But prophecy is not only given for warning, but also for encouragement and comfort. A few facts will demonstrate this.

1. In the case of Enoch, He lived at a time when iniquity was abounding, and the inhabitants of the earth were ripening for the fearful destruction of the flood, which swept away the ungodly. What was it that supported his mind at this dismal period, but faith in the prophecy, which he was instructed to deliver to others, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." This sure word would support his mind; and inspire him with hope in the dark gloom by which he was surrounded. This would more especially be the case with Noah, who lived at the very time when the catastrophe took place. His mind would be sustained and animated by faith in this declaration, at the time when he builded the ark, and encountered the scoffs and oppositions of an ungodly world.

2. What was it that sustained the patriarchs in their sojournings, but the sure word of prophecy, that they should inherit the land, and be rewarded with it as an everlasting possession? This prophetic assurance was the promise which they believed was to be fulfilled, at a great