The Lord’s Second Advent Predicted
In Ancient Scripture

“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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]. So spake the white-robed angels to the eleven apostles as the resurrected Christ ascended from their midst on Olivet. The scriptures abound in predictions of the Lord’s return.

By the “second advent” we understand not the personal appearing of the Son of God to a few, such as His visitation to Saul of Tarsus, to Joseph Smith in 1820, and again in the Kirtland Temple in 1836; nor later manifestations to His worthy servants as specifically promised [see also D&C 110:8; compare 36:8; 42:36; 97:15, 16; 109:5; 124:27; 133:2]; but His yet future coming in power and great glory, accompanied by hosts of resurrected and glorified beings, to execute judgment upon the earth and to inaugurate a reign of righteousness.

The prophets of both hemispheres, who lived prior to the meridian of time, said comparatively little concerning the Lord’s second coming; their souls were too full of the merciful plan of redemption associated with the Savior’s birth into mortality to permit them to dwell upon the yet more distant consummation appointed for the last days. Certain of them, however, were permitted to behold in Vision the working out of the divine purposes even to the end of time; and these testified with unsurpassed fervency concerning the glorious coming of Christ in the final dispensation. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied saying, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all”[Jude 14, 15; compare Gen. 5:18; see next reference following]. In a more extended account of the Lord’s revelations to Enoch than is included in the Bible, we read that after this righteous prophet had been shown the scenes of Israel’s history, down to and beyond the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, he pleaded with God, saying: “I ask thee if thou wilt not come again on the earth. And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah.... And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years”[Moses 7:59, 60, 65. Note 1, end of chapter]. Isaiah, in rapturous contemplation of the eventual triumph of righteousness, exclaimed: “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you”; and again: “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him”[Isa. 35:4; and 40:10; see also Ps. 50:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5, 6]. The conditions specified were not realized in the earthly life of the Redeemer; moreover the context clearly shows that the prophet’s words are applicable to the last days only – the time of the ransomed of the Lord, the time of restitution, and of the triumph of Zion.

Of all Biblical scriptures relating to our subject, the utterances of the Christ Himself in the course of His earthly ministry are most direct and certain. Many of these we have already considered in the narrative of the Savior’s life; the few following are sufficient for present demonstration. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” [Matt. 16:27]. To the apostles and the people generally He proclaimed: “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels”[Mark 8:38; compare Luke 9:26]. When a bound prisoner before proud Caiaphas, Jesus answered the unlawful adjuration of the corrupt high priest, by affirming: “I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” [Matt. 26:64].
The apostles had been so impressed with the Master’s assurance that He would return to earth in power and glory, that they eagerly questioned as to the time and signs of His coming [Matt. 24:3; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:7; Acts 1:6]. He stated explicitly, though at the time they failed to comprehend Him, that many great events would intervene between His departure and return, including the long era of darkness associated with the apostasy. [Matt. 24; see chaps. 32 and 40 herein.] But as to the certainty of His advent in glory, as Judge, and Lord, and King, Jesus left no excuse for dubiety in the minds of His apostles. After the ascension, throughout the course of apostolic administration, the future coming of the Lord was preached with earnest emphasis [See Acts 3:20, 21; 1 Cor. 4:5; 11:26; Philip. 3:20; 1 Thes. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-18; 2 Thes. 2:1, 8; 1 Tim. 6:14, 15; Titus 2:13; James 5:7, 8; 1 Pet. 1:5-7; 4:13; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14, etc.].

Book of Mormon prophecies concerning the advent of the Lord in the last days are specific and definite. On the occasion of His appearing to the Nephites on the American continent shortly after His ascension from the Mount of Olives, Christ preached the gospel to assembled multitudes; “And he did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory”; and the events to follow, “even unto the great and last day” [3 Ne. 26:3, 4]. In granting the wish of the three Nephite disciples who desired to continue their ministry in the flesh throughout the generations to come, the Lord said unto them:

Ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father, unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled, according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory, with the powers of heaven; And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory, ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality: and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father. [3 Ne. 28:7, 8; see also 29:2.]

The Coming Of The Lord Proclaimed Through Modern Revelation

To the Church of Jesus Christ, restored and reestablished in these the last days, the word of the Lord has come repeatedly, declaring the actuality of His second advent and the nearness of that glorious yet dreadful event. But a few months after the Church was organized, the voice of Jesus Christ was heard, admonishing the elders to vigilance and proclaiming as follows:

For the hour is nigh, and the day soon at hand when the earth is ripe: and all the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth; for the hour is nigh, and that which was spoken by mine apostles must be fulfilled; for as they spoke so shall it come to pass; for I will reveal myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand. [D&C 29:9-11.]

In the month following, the Lord gave instructions to certain elders, concluding with these portentous words:

Wherefore, be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom: for behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that I come quickly. Even so. Amen. [D&C 33:17, 18.]

Again we read in a later revelation:

And blessed are you because you have believed; and more blessed are you because you are called of me to preach my gospel, to lift up your voice as with the sound of a trump, both long and loud, and cry repentance unto a crooked and perverse generation, preparing the way of the Lord for his second coming; for behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, the time is soon at hand, that I shall come in a cloud with power and great glory, and it shall be a great day at the time of my coming, for all nations shall tremble. [D&C 34:4-8.]

The Lord Jesus addressed a general revelation to His Church in March 1831, through which His earlier predictions uttered to the Twelve shortly before His betrayal were made plain, and the assurances of His glorious coming were thus reiterated:

Ye look and behold the fig-trees, and ye see them with your eyes, and ye say when they begin to shoot forth, and their leaves are yet tender, that summer is now nigh at hand; even so it shall be in that day when they shall see all these things, then shall they know that the hour is nigh. And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of man: And they shall see signs and wonders, for they shall be shown forth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath; and they shall behold blood, and fire, and vapors of smoke; and before the day of the Lord shall come, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon be turned into blood, and stars fall from
heaven; and the remnant shall be gathered unto this place, and then they shall look for me, and, behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory, with all the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off. [D&C 45:37-44; compare this section with Matt. 24, and Luke 21:5-36.]

So near is the consummation that the intervening period is called “today”; and, in applying this time designation in the year 1831, the Lord said:

Behold, now it is called today (until the coming of the Son of man), and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned (at his coming); For after today cometh the burning: this is speaking after the manner of the Lord; for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of hosts: and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon. Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today. [D&C 64:23-25.]

The Time And Accompaniments Of The Lord’s Coming

The date of the future advent of Christ has never been revealed to man. To the inquiring apostles who labored with the Master, He said: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” [Matt. 24:36; compare Mark 13:32-37]. In the present age, a similar declaration has been made by the Father: “I, the Lord God, have spoken it, but the hour and the day no man knoweth, nor shall they know until he comes” [D&C 49:7; the context shows that the words are those of the Father]. Only through watchfulness and prayer may the signs of the times be correctly interpreted and the imminence of the Lord’s appearing be apprehended. To the unwatchful and the wicked the event will be as sudden and unexpected as the coming of a thief in the night [1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; compare Matt. 24:43, 44; 25:13; Luke 12:39, 40]. But we are not left without definite information as to precedent signs. Biblical prophecies bearing upon this subject we have heretofore considered. As later scriptures affirm: “Before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed” [D&C 49:24, 25.]. War shall become so general that every man who will not take arms against his neighbor must of necessity flee to the land of Zion for safety [D&C 45:68-71]. Ephraim shall assemble in Zion on the western continent, and Judah shall be again established in the east; and the cities of Zion and Jerusalem shall be the capitals of the world empire, over which Messiah shall reign in undisputed authority. The Lost Tribes shall be brought forth from the place where God has hidden them through the centuries and receive their long deferred blessings at the hands of Ephraim. The people of Israel shall be restored from their scattered condition [D&C 133:7-14, 21-35; Articles of Faith, 18 and 19].

In addressing the elders of His Church in 1832, the Lord urged upon them the imperative need of devoted diligence, and said:

Abide ye in the liberty wherewith ye are made free; entangle not yourselves in sin but let your hands be clean, until the Lord come; For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man, and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light, and the moon shall be bathed in blood, and the stars shall become exceeding angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig tree. And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people: For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground, and shall not be able to stand. And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunders, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea, heaving themselves beyond their bounds. And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people; And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying, Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come: behold, and lo! the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. [D&C 88:86-92]

A characteristic of present-day revelation is the reiteration of the fact that the event is nigh at hand, “even at the doors.” The fateful time is repeatedly designated in scripture, “the great and dreadful day of the Lord” [D&C 110:14, 16; compare Joel 2:31; Mal. 4:5; 3 Ne. 25:5]. Fearful indeed will it be to individuals, families, and nations, who have so far sunk into sin as to have forfeited their claim to mercy. The time is not that of the final judgment – when the whole race of mankind shall stand in the resurrected state before the bar of God – nevertheless it shall be a time of unprecedented blessing unto the righteous and of condemnation and vengeance upon the wicked [D&C 29:11-17]. With
Christ shall come those who have already been resurrected; and His approach shall be the means of inaugurating a general resurrection of the righteous dead, while the pure and just who are still in the flesh shall be instantaneously changed from the mortal to the immortal state and shall be caught up with the newly resurrected to meet the Lord and His celestial company, and shall descend with Him. To this effect did Paul prophesy: “Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” [1 Thes. 4:14-17]. Compare the promise made to the Three Nephites: “And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory, ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality” [3 Ne. 28:8]. Of the superlative glories awaiting the righteous when the Lord shall come, we have received in this day a partial description as follows: “And the face of the Lord shall be unveiled; and the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened, and be caught up to meet him”[D&C 88:95-98]. The heathen nations shall be redeemed and have part in the first resurrection [Note 2, end of chapter].

The Kingdom Of Heaven To Come

The coming of Christ in the last days, accompanied by the apostles of old [D&C 29:12] and by the resurrected saints, is to mark the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. The faithful apostles who were with Jesus in His earthly ministry are to be enthroned as judges of the whole house of Israel [D&C 29:12; compare Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30]; they will judge the Nephite Twelve, who in turn will be empowered to judge the descendants of Lehi, or that branch of the Israelitish nation which was established upon the western continent [3 Ne. 27:27; compare 1 Ne. 12:9, 10; Morm. 3:18, 19].

While the expressions “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven” are used in the Bible synonymously or interchangeably, later revelation gives to each a distinctive meaning. The Kingdom of God is the Church established by divine authority upon the earth; this institution asserts no claim to temporal rule over nations; its sceptre of power is that of the Holy Priesthood, to be used in the preaching of the gospel and in administering its ordinances for the salvation of mankind living and dead. The Kingdom of Heaven is the divinely ordained system of government and dominion in all matters, temporal and spiritual; this will be established on earth only when its rightful Head, the King of kings, Jesus the Christ, comes to reign. His administration will be one of order, operated through the agency of His commissioned representatives invested with the Holy Priesthood. When Christ appears in His glory, and not before, will be realized a complete fulfilment of the supplication: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

The Kingdom of God has been established among men to prepare them for the Kingdom of Heaven which shall come; and in the blessed reign of Christ the King shall the two be made one. The relationship between them has been revealed to the Church in this wise:

Hearken, and lo, a voice as of one from on high, who is mighty and powerful, whose going forth is unto the ends of the earth, yea, whose voice is unto men -- Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands, shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth; Yea, a voice crying -- Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom; Pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name, make known his wonderful works among the people; Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in which the Son of man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth; Wherefore may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thy enemies may be subdued: for thine is the honour, power and glory, for ever and ever. Amen. [D&C 65. For a fuller treatment of this subject as also the distinction between Church and Kingdom, see The Articles of Faith, pp. 365-68.]

The Millennium

The inauguration of Christ’s reign on earth is to be the beginning of a period that shall be distinct in many important particulars from all precedent and subsequent time; and the Lord shall reign with His people a thousand years. The government of individuals, communities and nations throughout this Millennium is to be that of a perfect theocracy, with Jesus the Christ as Lord and King. The more wicked part of the race shall have been destroyed; and during the period Satan shall
be bound “that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled”; while the just shall share with Christ in rightful rule and dominion. The righteous dead shall have come forth from their graves, while the wicked shall remain unresurrected until the thousand years be past [Rev. 20:1-6; compare D&C 43:18]. Men yet in the flesh shall mingle with immortalized beings; children shall grow to maturity and then die in peace or be changed to immortality “in the twinkling of an eye” [D&C 63:50-51; 101:30; compare 1 Cor. 15:51-57]. There shall be surcease of enmity between man and beast; the venom of serpents and the ferocity of the brute creation shall be done away, and love shall be the dominant power of control. Among the earliest revelations on the subject is that given to Enoch; and in this the return of that prophet and his righteous people with Christ in the last days was thus assured:

And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years. [Moses 7:63-65]

In these latter days the Lord has thus spoken, requiring preparation for the Millennial era, and describing in part the glories thereof:

And prepare for the revelation which is to come, when the veil of the covering of my temple, in my tabernacle, which hideth the earth, shall be taken off, and all flesh shall see me together. And every corruptible thing, both of man, or of the beasts of the field, or of the fowls of the heavens, or of the fish of the sea, that dwell upon all the face of the earth, shall be consumed; And also that of element shall melt with fervent heat; and all things shall become new, that my knowledge and glory may dwell upon all the earth. And in that day the enmity of man, and the enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh, shall cease from before my face. And in that day whatsoever any man shall ask, it shall be given unto him. And in that day Satan shall not have power to tempt any man. And there shall be no sorrow because there is no death. In that day an infant shall not die until he is old, and his life shall be as the age of a tree, and when he dies he shall not sleep, (that is to say in the earth,) but shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and shall be caught up, and his rest shall be glorious. Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things. [D&C 101:23-32; compare Isa. 65:17-25 and 11:6-9; see also D&C 29:11, 22; 43:30; 63:51]

The Millennium is to precede the time designated in scriptural phrase “the end of the world.” When the thousand years are passed, Satan shall be loosed for a little season, and the final test of man’s integrity to God shall ensue. Such as are prone to impurity of heart shall yield to temptation while the righteous shall endure to the end [Rev. 20:7-15]. A revelation to this effect was given the Church in 1831, in part as follows:

For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come; For Satan shall be bound, and when he is loosed again, he shall only reign for a little season, and then cometh the end of the earth; And he that liveth in righteousness shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and the earth shall pass away so as by fire; And the wicked shall go away into unquenchable fire, and their end no man knoweth on earth, nor ever shall know, until they come before me in judgment. Hearken ye to these words: Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. Treasure these things up in your hearts, and let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds. [D&C 43:30-34. See also The Articles of Faith, pp. 358-71]

The Celestial Consummation

The vanquishment of Satan and his hosts shall be complete. The dead, small and great, all who have breathed the breath of life on earth, shall be resurrected – every soul that has tabernacled in flesh, whether good or evil -- and shall stand before God, to be judged according to the record as written in the books [Rev. 20:11-15]. So shall be brought to glorious consummation the mission of the Christ. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet” [1 Cor. 15:24-27]. Then shall the Lord Jesus “deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father spotless, saying – I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. Then shall he be crowned with the crown of his glory, to sit on the throne of his power to reign for ever and ever” [D&C 76:107, 108]. The earth shall pass to its glorified and celestialized
condition, an eternal abode for the exalted sons and daughters of God [Note 3, end of chapter]. Forever shall they reign, kings and priests to the Most High, redeemed, sanctified, and exalted through their Lord and God JESUS THE CHRIST.

NOTES

1. Enoch, spoken of by Jude as “the seventh from Adam,” was the father of Methuselah. In Genesis 5:24 we read: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him.” From the Lord’s revelation to Moses we learn that Enoch was a mighty man, favored of God because of his righteousness, and a leader of and revelator to his people. Through his agency a city was built, the inhabitants of which excelled in righteous living to such an extent that they were of one heart and one mind and had no poor among them. It was called the City of Holiness or Zion. The residue of the race were all corrupt in the sight of the Lord. Enoch and his people were taken from the earth and are to return with Christ at His coming. (Moses 7:12-21, 68, 69; compare D&C 45:11, 12.)

2. Heathen in the First Resurrection. – “And then shall the heathen nations be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them.” (D&C 45:54.) Such is the word of the Lord with respect to those benighted peoples who live and die in ignorance of the laws of the gospel. This affirmation is sustained by other scriptures, and by a consideration of the principles of true justice according to which humanity is to be judged. Man shall be accounted blameless or guilty according to his deeds as interpreted in the light of the law under which he is required to live. It is inconsistent with our conception of a just God to believe Him capable of inflicting condemnation upon any one for non-compliance with a requirement of which the person had no knowledge. Nevertheless, the laws of the gospel cannot be suspended even in the case of those who have sinned in darkness and ignorance; but it is reasonable to believe that the plan of redemption shall afford such benighted ones an opportunity of learning the laws of God; and, as fast as they so learn, will obedience be required on pain of the penalty.

3. Regeneration of the Earth. -- In speaking of the graded and progressive glories provided for His creations, and of the laws of regeneration and sanctification, the Lord has thus spoken through revelation in the present dispensation: “And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law. Wherefore it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it.” (D&C 88:25, 26.) This appointed change, by which the earth shall pass to the condition of a celestialized world, is referred to in numerous scriptures as the institution of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1, 3, 4; Ether 13:9; D&C 29:23).